# Commentary

Volume Seventy-five, Number Five, May 1983

## The Euromissile Crisis
Stephen Haseler

## Totalitarianism & the Lie
Leszek Kolakowski

## The Secret Life of Sarah Lawrence
Louise Blecher Rose

## Jewish History and the Sephardim
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## FICTION: How Good Is Gabriel García Márquez?
Joseph Epstein

## BOOKS:
Mark Falcoff
Maurice Friedberg
Jeffrey Marsh
Julius Weinberg
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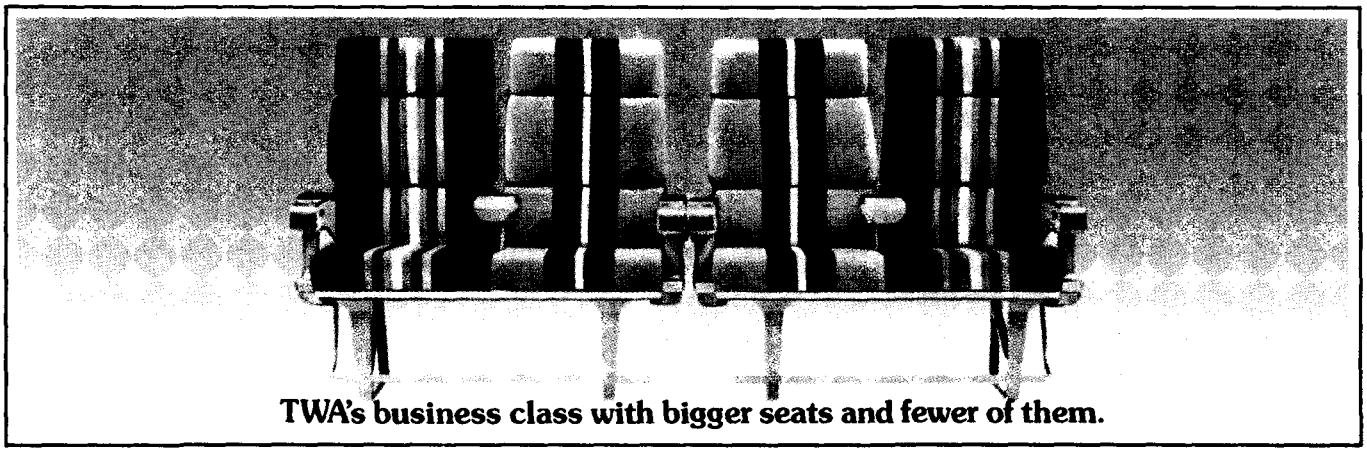

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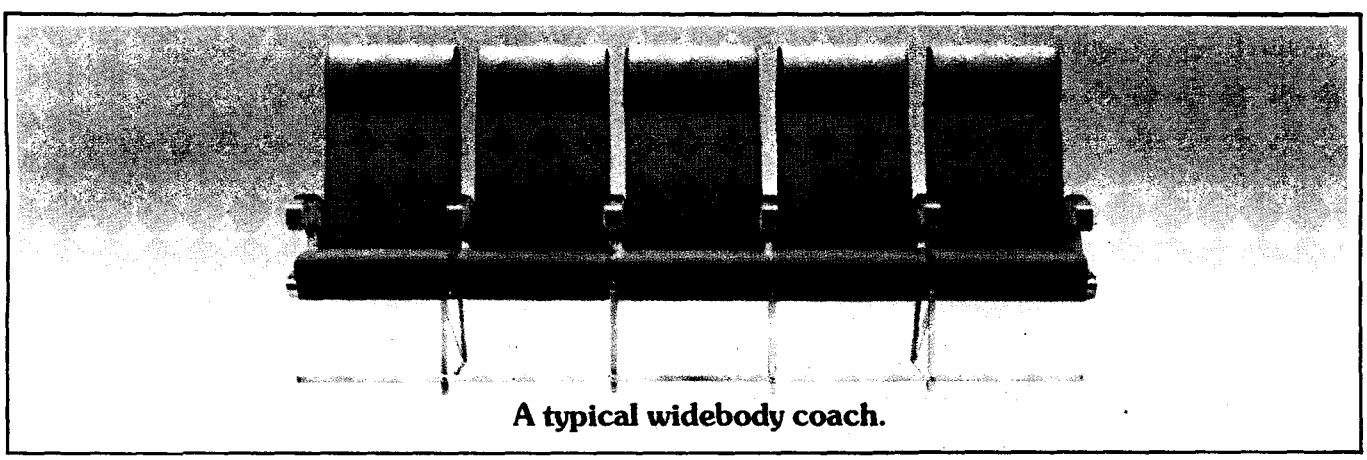

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# Commentary

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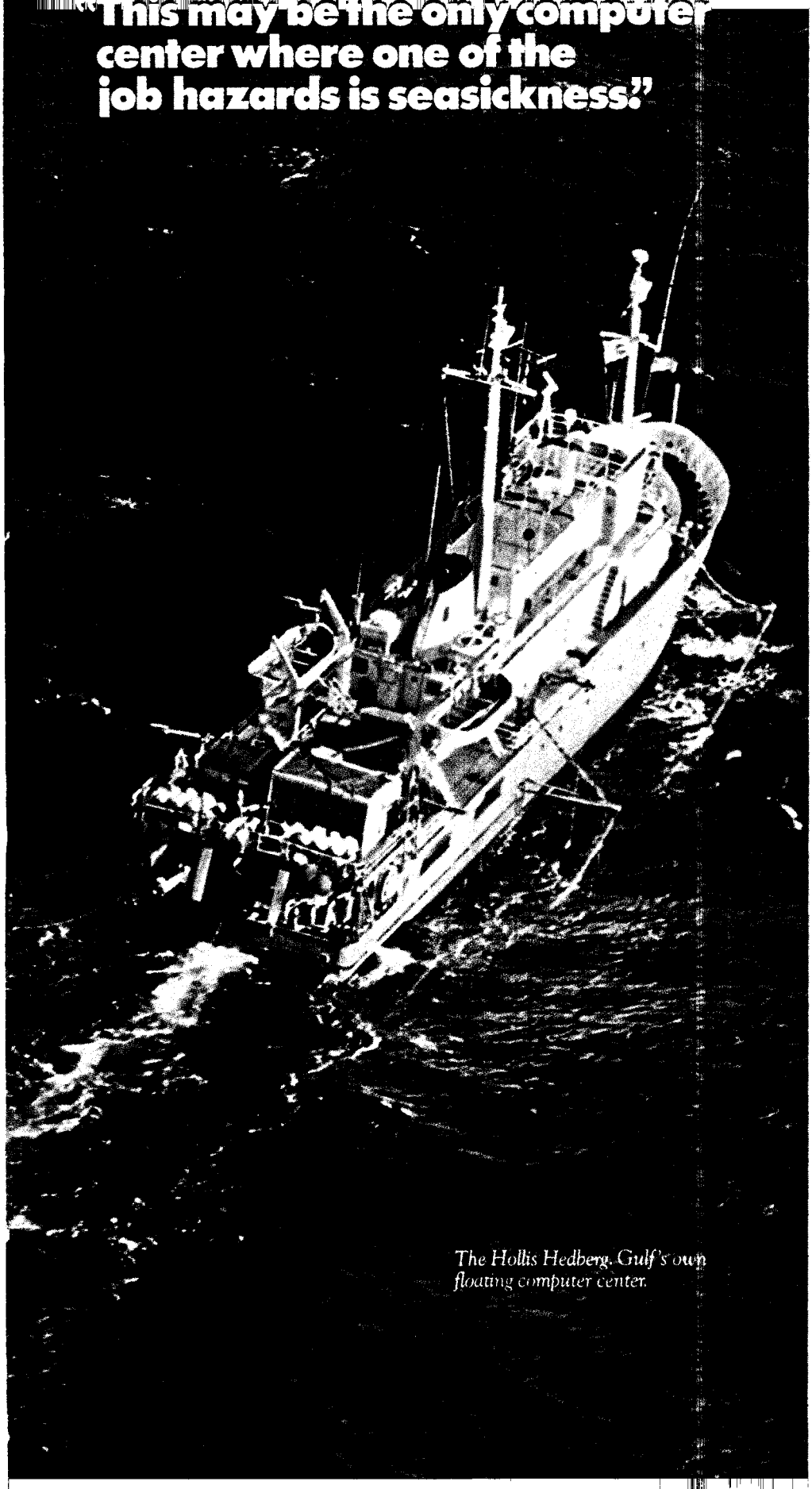

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# Letters from Readers

## The German Interest

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I do not know what university David Gress attended, or what subjects he chose to study, but obviously he chose too many. What he dishes out in his article, "What the West Should Know About German Neutralism" [January], does not give evidence of any knowledge one might acquire through studies. Rather, it gives evidence of exactly those prejudices which are so dear to so many Americans, and which do not explain but add further confusion to the treacherous term, "German neutralism." Let's start with the past.

Bismarck by no means considered the Western countries of England and France a threat to his Reich. It just so happened that when he set out to create the German Reich, Russia was his natural ally. To a certain extent the same was true of England; in any case, England was not his enemy.

Of France, on the other hand, Bismarck had made an eternal enemy through the unwise amputation of Alsace and Lorraine after the war of 1870-71. The purpose of the so-called "double-assurance treaty" of 1887 was not to prevent war with France and Russia but to give the German Reich an additional six weeks in case of war. Both Bismarcks, the old man as well as his son Herbert, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, did not just know this, they also stated it. It takes quite a bit of ignorance even to use the catchword phrase "double-assurance treaty" in connection with German neutralism, as Mr. Gress does. If the German chiefs of staff had had their say, there would have been a war in 1888—but it would have been with Russia, not with France and England.

Mr. Gress's ignorance also shows in his contention that there was very little anti-Russian propaganda in Germany during World War I. Let us not talk of German writers and authors of 1914, let us talk only of the man then in charge, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg: he demonized czarist Russia as the real warmonger in order to draw the Social Democrats—who were traditionally ill-disposed toward Russia—into his war. And he succeeded. We really should not overestimate the influence of chameleon-like writers like Thomas Mann—they hardly ever had any influence on policy. Mann in particular never did.

It is undoubtedly true that the German chiefs of staff wanted to weaken Russia by permitting Lenin to travel to Petrograd in 1917. But this is what upsets us Germans: whenever the Americans, the British, the French conduct their kind of *Realpolitik*, it's fine, it's for the benefit of the country, of Christian culture, or of Western civilization. Only the Germans are not permitted to think of their own interest or needs; if they do, they are either anti-Western or German neutralists. The insinuation that the German chiefs of staff sent Lenin to Petrograd because of their pro-Russian slant is pure nonsense and is not even worth arguing with. As a matter of fact, the German chiefs of staff wanted to seize the Russian empire's most important provinces.

I could continue, but this should suffice, I think, to show that the author does not present historically substantiated facts, he just presents his own preconceptions about "German neutralism."

There are several minor passages where he admits, though without actually saying so, that today's Germans might think differently about their country's situation from the way Americans, British, and French do. He talks, for example, of the "apparently insoluble East-West conflict," of a "national question," of the "need for a national identity."

All right, these are historically documented facts. There is a German "national question." But at the moment one sees little chance of finding an answer to this question (just as the Polish people face a "Communist question" which has no apparent answer).

It goes without saying that the author includes me as one of the main figures in his cast of characters advocating German neutralism. After all, my editorials are full of anti-American suspicions, full of sympathy for the Soviets, and full of poorly disguised anti-Semitism, as can be seen in the case of what the author calls the "Lebanon crisis."

I do not want to respond to the last charge. But about the others let me say only this: I myself got my relatives out of Saxony and



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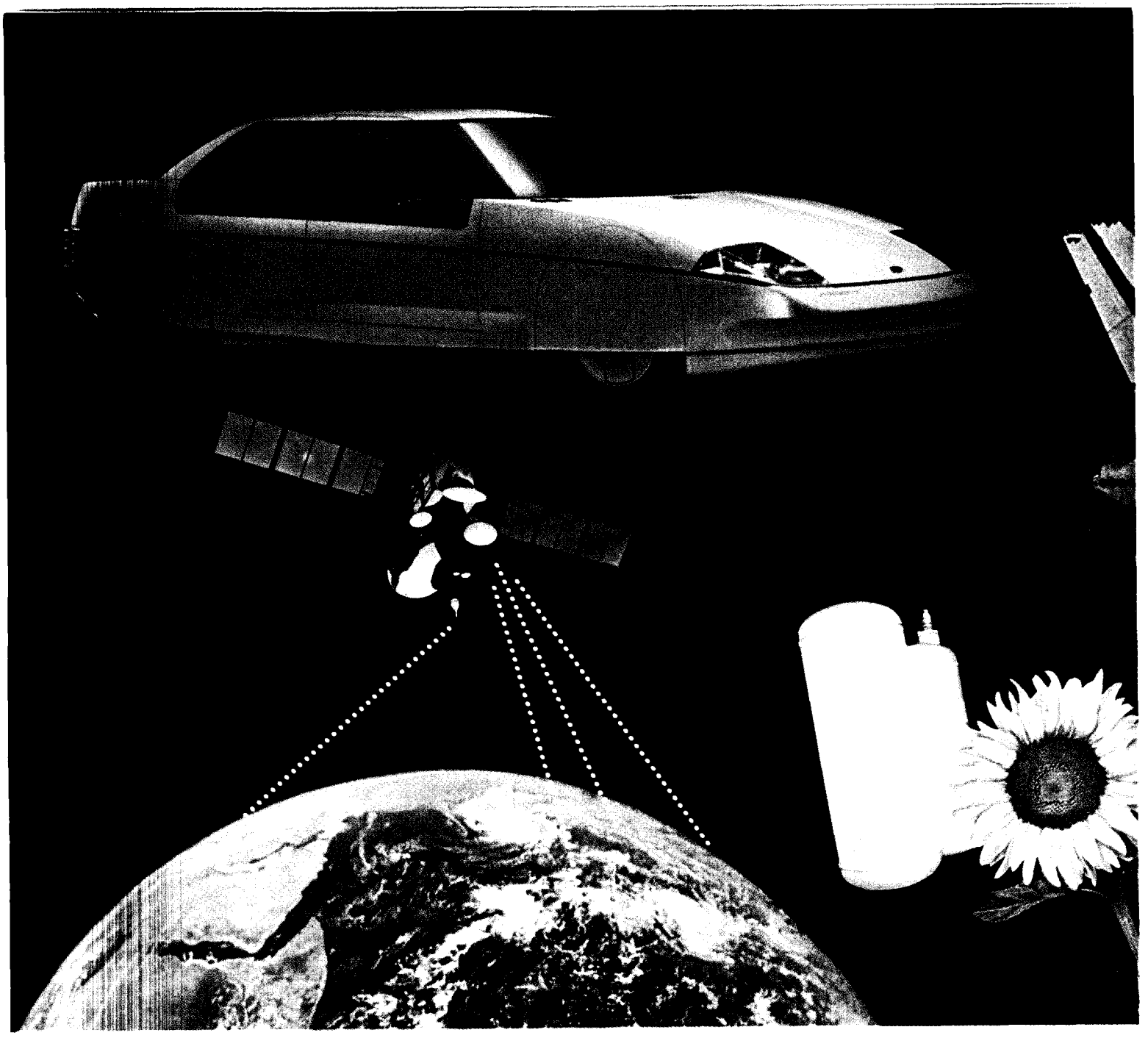

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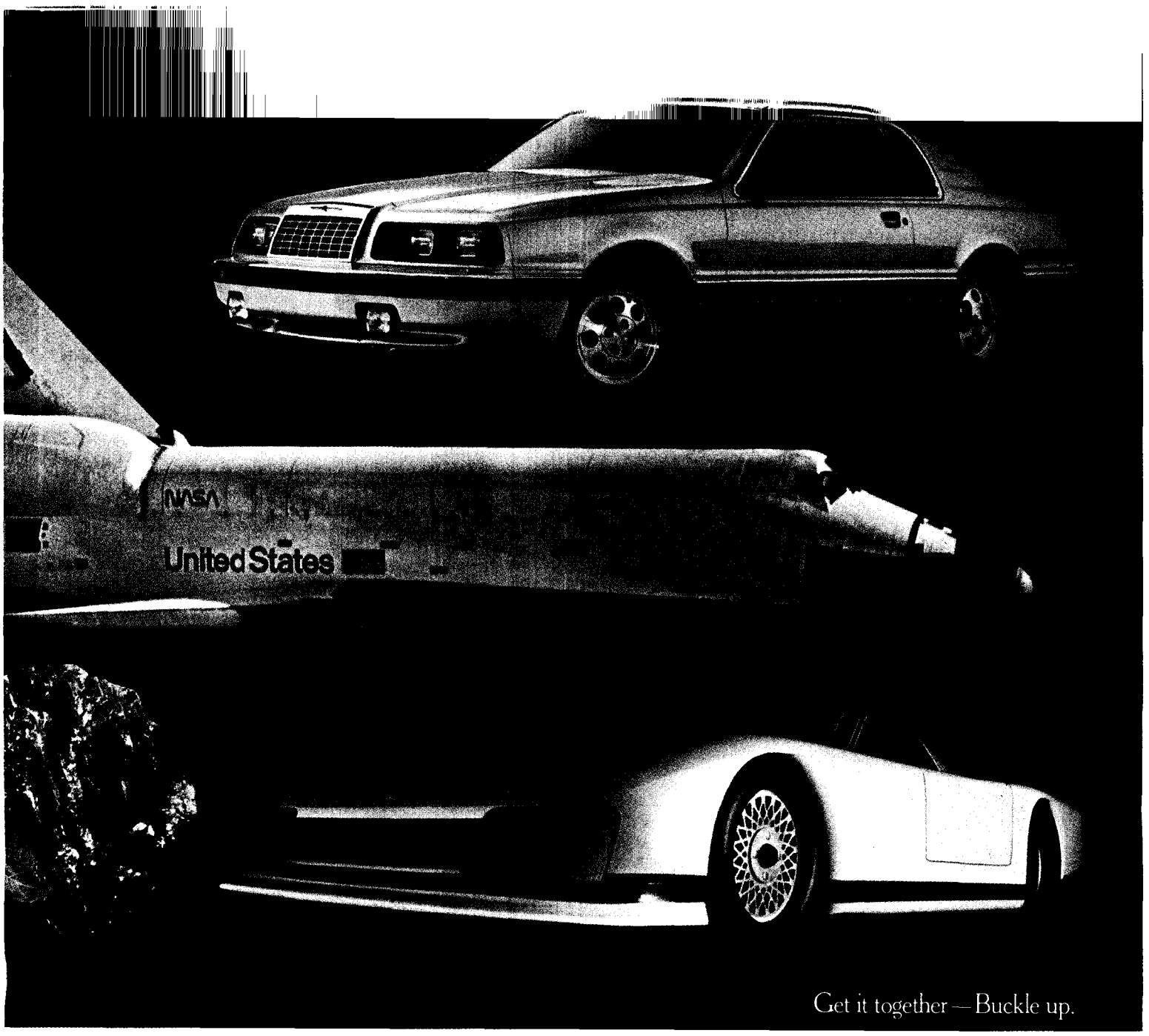


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Thuringia when the Soviets marched in to replace the Americans; *Der Spiegel* owes its existence, as I do mine as a journalist, to the Americans and the British. (Although I am certainly not anti-youth, here I should like to inquire about the author's age.)

Let me give a brief outline of my position.

Konrad Adenauer did not want reunification because, among other things, it could only have meant the reunification of a neutral Germany. (Incidentally, I was among the first who talked to him about the necessity of arming Germany against the Soviet Union; I was very young at the time.) Today I believe that, for lack of the necessary preconditions, there was no real possibility of a united Germany, armed but neutral. Adenauer, however, feared—and I know this from his special adviser Blankenhorn as well—that this is exactly what the Russians might have been prepared to concede.

I still believe that a neutral and moderately armed Germany would be of much greater service to world peace than that explosive bomb we are sitting on in Central Europe, not to mention vulnerable West Berlin. Such eminent people as Walter Lippmann and Sebastian Haffner also shared this opinion in those days.

It does not make much sense, however, to cry over spilled milk, particularly when the bottle might not have contained any at all. As it is today, a neutral and moderately armed Germany, i.e. a Germany consisting of the Federal Republic and the GDR, is inconceivable. And it is very doubtful whether it will ever become conceivable.

But why does a former German neutralist automatically have to be an enemy of the United States and the West? The July 12, 1955 U.S. government *Intelligence Report No. 6933*, made available only recently, dealt with "Problems and Policies of a Reunited Neutral Germany" and did not say anything different from what I said. Irrespective of the fact that this solution was already impossible even then, and that probably only Stalin could have carried it out, nevertheless, American experts on Germany held exactly the same opinion I voiced in 1952. Thus, the reunification of Germany was on President Eisenhower's agenda when, on July 18, 1955, at the Geneva summit he met with Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin and also with Prime Minister Eden and Premier Faure, who certainly differed.

We won't put up with anybody—we are too old and too rich—calling us anti-American simply because in 1952 we voiced an opinion which the Americans themselves voiced in 1955.

My sympathy for the Soviets goes so far that, in 1969, a mutual friendship conference in Leningrad almost failed because of my participation. Media from many countries have correspondents and offices in the GDR; *Der Spiegel* does not. Nevertheless people like David Gress ram the legend of Rapallo down our throats. A legend? Yes, a legend. That was the Germany of Gustav Stresemann, who based his politics on cooperating with the Western powers, being both a German patriot and a European liberal (unlike Stresemann, neither *Der Spiegel* nor I have ever advocated any change in Poland's western border, created by war).

It is true, however, that unlike Adenauer, we recommended that one should at least talk about Stalin's memorandum of 1952. But it was not talked about because of fear that it meant what it said. Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. Stalin in any case died.

Today, I cannot think of a neutralized and nuclear-free Germany, all the way to the Oder-Neisse border. What I can think of, however, is a war which would start just the same way previous wars started: *"Si vis pacem para bellum"* [If you want peace, prepare for war].

That's why I strictly oppose the so-called *Nachruestung* [restoring the military balance]. Neither Pershing 2's nor cruise missiles ought to be deployed in the Federal Republic. As things stand, this is obviously an anti-Western attitude, but I cannot help it.

As one can hear—and smell—at any defense colloquium in the West, Pershing 2's on German soil do not serve the common interest of the Western countries. They serve—some say it, some don't—to lower the risk for the United States, for Britain and France, and to raise our own risk. And should not a German be permitted to offer resistance?

I strictly oppose the idea that Germany not only should not achieve its national identity but, in the interest of America, Britain, and France, should not protect the security of its own people (for this I am called "nationalist"). Recently, we feel that we are being treated as a quasi-colony by the U. S. administration. It is not for us to decide whether our trade is harmful to the West—the U.S. administration wants to decide for us; it is not for us to decide which weapons are to be deployed on our small territory—although every single state in the U.S. is entitled to do this. If there really aren't enough medium-range missiles, why not deploy them where they belong, i.e., at sea?

We should not forget that half of the politically interested Americans we know—and we know the whole spectrum of politically interested Americans—shares our opinion. Why, then, am I a "neutralist anti-American"? Why am I not permitted to be a patriot like Gustav Stresemann or John Wayne, so long as I am sensible, do not defend the Alamo, or start to massacre the Indians?

I should rather be a colonial American than somebody who has to live in Poland, or Russia, or even as a citizen of the GDR. But—and this the Americans should understand—this is a no-win alternative.

RUDOLF AUGSTEIN
Publisher, *Der Spiegel*
Hamburg, West Germany

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The otherwise excellent and well-informed article by David Gress contains a minor error which I should like to correct. When it was run by Giselher Wirsing, the weekly *Christ und Welt* was not a Catholic but a conservative-leaning Protestant paper. It later changed its title to *Deutsche Zeitung* and a few years ago merged with the Catholic weekly *Rheinischer Merkur*, thus having to forgo a good deal of the more or less liberal (in the German meaning of the word), free-market, Atlantic, anti-clerical flair it once had. Pity, but the market sometimes swallows those who most strongly advocate its supremacy.

GOTTFRIED MERZ
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DAVID GRESS writes:

The publisher of *Der Spiegel* is very exercised by what he considers evidence of my chaotic education and logical incoherence. In fact, he is so outraged by my charge against him of poorly disguised anti-Semitism that he "do[es] not want to respond." Well, I will let the read-

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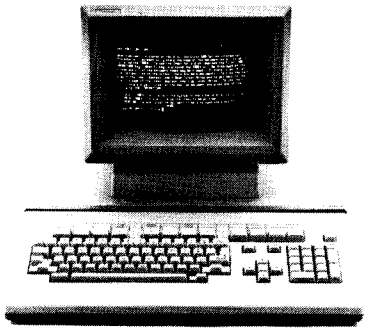

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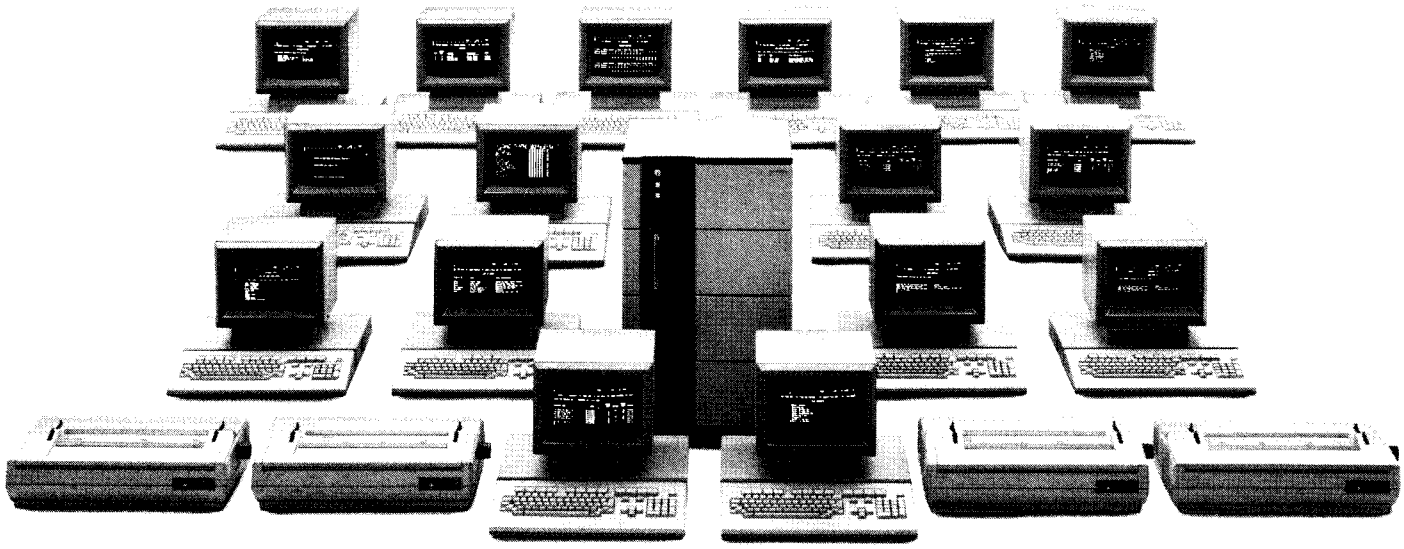

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er judge the political logic of a man who is capable of writing the following about the crisis in Lebanon: "The push toward Beirut is brutal, unjustifiable aggression"; the PLO's terrorism is "no less justified" than was that of Begin in 1947; "in 1948 Israel was the aggressor"; Sharon is "the villain of the piece"; Major Haddad, Israel's ally, is a "Quisling" (*Der Spiegel*, July 19, 1982). No mention is made of the murderous PLO shellings of Israeli settlements; no mention of the cynical exploitation by the PLO of Israeli attempts to limit the war by avoiding civilian targets—e.g., in the use by the PLO of UN schools and other installations as military command centers and ammunition dumps: no mention or attempted evaluation, in short, of the political and moral principles and practices of the two sides.

So far as Mr. Augstein's attitude to East-West relations is concerned, let me cite only one example among many, notable less for its assertions than for its underlying assumptions: an editorial of January 31, 1983 which claims that the Soviets are "clearly weaker" than the West, that the Americans "don't really want the zero solution" as an answer to the imbalance of theater nuclear forces, and that they want to "reduce their own risk" while increasing that of Germany, though for what purpose Mr. Augstein does not make clear. Two weeks earlier he had written that "no one in a position of responsibility in the U.S. government has any experience in foreign or security policy" and had poked fun at Kenneth Adelman for allegedly wanting "more missiles and fewer jobs" while denigrating his association with the "savage Kirkpatrick," as he called her. The motif of these and other pieces is that the U.S. is defending a "policy driving toward nuclear war," whereas "Soviet moves in the direction of sensible negotiated solutions" are routinely "rejected by Washington and, of course, by Bonn."

With these views and the premises they imply, it is hardly relevant for Mr. Augstein to recall his undoubtedly creditable and courageous deeds in saving his family from the Soviet zone and protecting journalists in Eastern capitals filing stories inconvenient to the local despots. I am not questioning his personal courage, I am simply arguing that the consequences of his outlook are fatal to the very values that he, as a liberal, must profess.

As for his historical arguments: I fully agree that "for lack of the necessary preconditions, there was no real possibility of a united Germany, armed but neutral." The relevant precondition, however, was not, as Mr. Augstein seems to believe, a different attitude on Adenauer's part, but Western willingness to roll back Soviet power, which could most probably have been done in 1953-55. There was never any chance of the Soviet Union accepting a neutral Germany, despite Stalin's famous "Note Campaign" of 1952. That campaign was designed, as we now know, precisely to create the myth in vulnerable West German circles that the Soviet Union would tolerate a neutral Germany and to create dissension on the issue of security—and in this aim it succeeded. Even a united socialist Germany would probably not have been acceptable to the Soviets, and certainly never a merely neutral Germany with democratic institutions and a free-market economy.

This brings me to the final question of national interest. I am sorry if my article gave the impression that I do not respect or support the German national interest. I believe absolutely that the division of Germany and Europe is a moral and political outrage and that no self-respecting politician or political commentator ought to accept it, much less rationalize it, as many have been doing now for over ten years. The reunification of Germany within a democratic constitutional state is the only legitimate German national interest. One force alone opposes this: the Soviet Union and its rag-tag of petty despots in the illegitimate and illegal regimes of Eastern Europe, including East Germany. Therefore, by strict political logic, defense of the German national interest implies resistance to Soviet power as well as the defense of the Federal Republic. There is, in fact, no German interest separate from that of Western security, and the argument that it is somehow "in the German interest" to reject the modernization of intermediate nuclear forces is either illogical or willfully dangerous. The modernization of those forces is both a symbolic and a material demonstration of the collective Western will to resist, and to redress, a situation in which the credibility of deterrence has become threatened; as such it is most certainly in the general Western as well as the specifically German interest to support it.

## McCarthy & Populism

To the Editor of Commentary:

Richard Hofstadter cannot speak for himself, alas, but I feel that Nelson W. Polsby ["Down Memory Lane with Joe McCarthy," February] has gotten wrong the characterization of McCarthy as a populist which Hofstadter, Seymour Martin Lipset, and I ("the Columbia group" he refers to) tried to draw in the 1950's.

Mr. Polsby cites Michael Rogin's view that "McCarthyism had no authentic populist roots and McCarthy no disproportionate number of populist followers" to support his "elite-Republican" argument. But this is to mistake the figure for the ground.

The questions we raised were about the rhetoric and imagery of McCarthy. Briefly put, this was a demonology which, while perhaps not drawing deliberately on the rhetoric of Ignatius F. Donnelly, Tom Watson, and other populist writers and politicians, was derived from them, as can be seen in its appeal to the "small-town" and "redneck" mentality, the fear of modernity, of cosmopolitanism, of nonconformity—and behind all that, historically, the stereotype of the Jew, of the money powers, and of liberalism.

This analysis of ours (which I have been forced to simplify for lack of space, but which is available in the volume I edited, *The Radical Right*) was joined to a broader historical picture of politics in American life. Against the view of Charles A. Beard (and a crude version of Marx) which saw economic divisions as the axis of conflict, we argued that there was also a cultural division on social issues. Thus we tried to utilize two axes (one of Left/Right on economic issues, the other liberal/conservative on social issues) and the salience of one or the other seesawed, so to speak, with the times. In the 1950's, we said, as in the 1920's (a period described by Joseph Gusfield in his *Symbolic Crusade*), status anxieties were more salient than economic divisions as the ground of politics.

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And this was the basis of Lipset's idea of "working-class authoritarianism," a "Left" stance on economic issues, but a "conservative" belief in social issues.

What McCarthy tried to do was to mobilize an anti-elite sentiment, and he did so in populist imagery —but instead of Wall Street, or "the Octopus," or the Banker, or the Jew, it was the Communist. (I leave aside the question of the reality content of that or the previous charges; the question is one of the techniques he employed, the passions he sought to stir.)

The McCarthy period was relatively short in American politics—fewer than five years. McCarthy himself did not seek to organize a social movement, for he was a rogue elephant. But the way McCarthy formulated his appeal derived from something deep in the moralizing strain of the American temper, in the willingness to believe in conspiracy and that debunkers are usually more right than wrong. McCarthy was in the line of a Tom Watson or a Huey Long, though not on economic issues. His focus was on the Ivy League colleges, the Eastern establishment, the liberals, the media, etc. And that has reechoed in the natterings of Spiro Agnew, Richard Nixon, and, today, in some of the New Right.

The double prisms that we tried to draw more than thirty years ago, to redress the simplicities of the economic determinists, are less distinct today (though still somewhat relevant) since there have been new cross-cutting lines: namely, the greater salience of foreign policy, the issues of governmental bureaucracy and the like, rather than the axes of economic and cultural division alone. Yet regarding McCarthy and those times, I think the main lines of our argument still stand.

DANIEL BELL
Cambridge, Massachusetts

NELSON W. POLSBY writes:

McCarthy and McCarthyism stimulated a lot of speculation—some of it very imaginative and interesting, as Daniel Bell's helpful summary of his views illustrates. As a student, years ago, I wondered how much of what was being said on these subjects was true. My conclusion, as I have indicated, is not that the ideas contributed by Mr. Bell and his colleagues were wrong, but only that in some instances I could not tell whether or not they were wrong, and in others the evidence in their favor was "pallid and inconclusive." Despite some efforts, especially by Seymour Martin Lipset in various of his publications, to bring added evidence to bear on these matters, in my view verification of these ideas has stood, along with the ideas themselves, roughly where they were left twenty-odd years ago.

## Jewish Writing

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

On reading Cynthia Ozick's "Bialik's Hint" [February], which, if I have successfully penetrated the thicket of her prose, calls for a fusion of Greek and Hebrew cultural ideals as a "new alternative" for the Jewish writer, I was afflicted with an uneasy feeling of *déjà vu*. After a quick race through my mind, the answer came to me—why, of course, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.

I took the book, which I had last read over a half-century ago, off the shelf and spent two delightful hours rummaging through Arnold's ruminations on the Hellenism-Hebraism dichotomy in English culture and its ultimate resolution. Here is the gist of his ideas, inadequately summarized (the genius is as much in the exposition as in the conclusions).

Arnold identifies Hebraism with doing and Hellenism with knowing and thinking:

> We may regard this energy driving at practice, this paramount sense of the obligation of duty, self-control, and work, this earnestness in going manfully with the best light we have, as one force [Hebraism]. And we may regard the intelligence driving at those ideas which are, after all, the basis of right practice, the ardent sense for all the new and changing combinations of them which man's development brings with it, the indomitable impulse to know and adjust them perfectly, as another force [Hellenism]. . . . He-

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braism and Hellenism—between these two points of influence moves our world. . . . Still, they pursue this aim [man's perfection] by very different courses. The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience. . . . The governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness;* that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience.* . . . Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light. Difficulties are kept out of view, and the beauty and rationalness of the ideal have all our thoughts. [Emphasis in original]

Arnold laments that whereas the Renaissance (the Enlightenment) produced in continental Europe a revival of the Greek spirit, its counterpart in England, the Reformation, perversely produced a revival of Hebraism (Puritanism). It was time, he argued, for a renewal of the Greek spirit. He concluded that in time a balance will be restored: "And thus man's two great natural forces, Hebraism and Hellenism, will no longer be dissociated and rival, but will be a joint force of right thinking and strong doing to carry him on to perfection. This is what the lovers of culture may perhaps dare to augur for such a nation as ours."

Bialik's hint ("the value of Aggadah is that it issues in Halakhah," etc.) may have given Miss Ozick a pregnant idea for a "new alternative," but Matthew Arnold has given us the whole baby in his still-timely book. Only a shift of emphasis to incorporate the unique Jewish experience is needed to provide a contemporary guide for the perplexed Jewish writer.

ELIAS M. SCHWARZBART
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Cynthia Ozick's article on post-Enlightenment Jewish consciousness is very welcome. The collapse of the traditional Jewish world view in the past two centuries has indeed left us with a dilemma. How are we to remain connected to the particularistic, idiosyncratic view of the classic Jewish world and yet retain the creativity which we presume the more individualistic modern West confers?

Miss Ozick, while she acknowledges a tendency toward the fanciful, the aggadic, the midrashic in the tradition, nevertheless chooses to define the essence of Judaism by its capacity for "moral seriousness," that is, the "Sinaitic challenge of distinctive restraint and responsibility." Additionally she posits a tension between the text-centered, circumscribed Jewish world, a world of "uniqueness" and "*religio,*" and the modern world of multiplicity and proliferation. . . . But doesn't the tradition . . . already contain within it the fusion which Miss Ozick desires: unity and multiplicity, restraint and imagination?

If Gershom Scholem's work suggests anything, it is that the classical Jewish world was in a state of dialectical tension between rationalism and profoundly irrational mythic elements, each, at the times of greatest creativity, informing the other. With the destruction of that world, these forces of myth and fancy found a variety of new expressions, one, as she notes, in literature.

I would suggest that another post-Enlightenment secularized expression of these mythic forces was in the development of psychoanalysis. . . . There is in addition both structural and symbolic evidence of homology between the tasks and language of the Kabbalah and those of psychoanalysis. It is in the kabbalistic willingness to confront the forces of the "other side," that is, the forces of evil, of the irrational within oneself, that the greatest transformation can occur. In other words, the task is to bring the "sparks hidden there" under more conscious, direct, liberated control. . . .

What I am arguing in no way negates the fundamental thrust of Miss Ozick's argument. Indeed, I stand with her in the belief that the reclamation of the Sinaitic world view in terms that are comprehensible to us is among the most urgent tasks of the contemporary Jewish world. I simply suggest both another classic confluence between reason and imagination and another modern arena where contact and fusion might fruitfully occur.

PAUL SUMMERGRAD
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her interesting article . . . Cynthia Ozick seems to ignore the idea of Zionism. Zionism, although a rebellion against both the Enlightenment and *shtetl* views of the Jew, chose to take the middle road by synthesizing the values of both into a new, higher culture. Zionism calls neither for the cultural ghetto of the *shtetl* nor for the Enlightenment dictum, "be a man abroad, a Jew at home"—or, as in most cases, be a Jew nowhere.

Zionism attempts to satisfy both of Miss Ozick's demands for a new Jewish literature and culture: the fusion of modernity with Judaism and the establishment of a "New Yiddish." . . . This process can only be completed, however, as Miss Ozick rightly points out, with a language. Her call for a "New Yiddish," though, would seem to insist on the eternal supremacy of the Diaspora in the development of a new Jewish culture. Miss Ozick would no doubt love to be a part of this revival, not minding if English could in the process be "Judaized" a bit. But the coming of Zionism and the state of Israel demand that this culture be based on Hebrew. For Miss Ozick, Hebrew cannot express certain ideas, notably those of modernity. And she is correct if she insists on using biblical or even mishnaic Hebrew, but Zionism, and Bialik himself, started Hebrew on the road to modernity. The revived Hebrew can create novels, essays, and modern poetry. . . .

A closer look at Zionism can give Miss Ozick the answers she wants.

IRA SLOMOWITZ
Baltimore, Maryland

CYNTHIA OZICK writes:

It is good of Elias M. Schwarzbart to remind us of some of the actual language of Matthew Arnold's seminal reflections on Hellenism and Hebraism—especially the much-lampooned phrase "sweetness and light" in its original setting. Arnold's formulation continues to stand back of most questions concerning Western cultural expression, but that very phrase, "sweetness and light," as well as its halo of "aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy," shows how much of Arnold's notion of Hellenism came from conventional Victorian idealization of Greek ideas and society. Plato is Greek, but there is little in Plato that is sweet. The mystery religions are Greek, and there is little in their obfuscations that casts light. And Arnold's definition of Hebraism is limited by his sense of the English Bible, surely a grand and vital service road, but hardly, for Jews, the main highway; moreover, it was the English Bible strained through the sieve of Puri-

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tanism. Nor did Arnold appear to have any inkling of the Aggadah side of Hebraism.

So it isn't enough—though it is surely useful—for Arnold to have declared that "between these two points of influence moves our world," if the two influences are not sufficiently delineated. That is why I cannot agree with Mr. Schwarzbart that "Matthew Arnold has given us the whole baby"—the baby is deformed, with too many parts missing. And even if the Arnoldian baby *were* whole, it is a mistake to suppose that "only a shift in emphasis" would offer a "contemporary guide for the perplexed Jewish writer." What a world of innovative rethinking is needed to fill out that potent "only"—the "shift in emphasis" being not quite so easy as turning a dial to sharpen the tuning.

In reply to Paul Summergrad's artful and eloquent remarks: in turning to Bialik's essay, I did more than merely *acknowledge* "a tendency toward the fanciful, the aggadic, the midrashic in the tradition"—Bialik's essay, after all, is as much about Aggadah as it is about Halakhah, and is in itself, of course, an imaginative midrash about the elasticity of the imagination. But it seems to me that the underlying grain of the Jewish impulse does ask for a brake on the irrational, as even the earliest proscriptions against astrology and divination demonstrate.

Gershom Scholem himself called Kabbalah "Jewish Gnosticism," a recognition of its source outside the central Jewish grain (though he would surely have quarreled with the notion of "central"). His case for the Jewishness of the Gnosticism that came into Jewish hands in the form of Kabbalah was simply that Jews were practicing it and were to some extent Judaizing it. It is not a watertight case, however dazzling the ingenious scholarship that reclaimed Kabbalah for our marveling attention and access. One might ask: if most of the Jews are dancing around a Golden Calf, does that make the Golden Calf a manifestation of the Jewish idea? (The example is admittedly coarse and reductive, as, it goes without saying, the imaginative splendors of Kabbalah are not.) Hence, "if Gershom Scholem's work suggests anything," it is that "fusion" must be exercised with huge care lest fusion become a mere devouring. Scholem's rediscovery of Kabbalah shows how the Jewish proclivity for proliferative distinction-making (its first creative model being God's own distinction-making, beginning with Genesis, Chapter One, Verse Four) was elaborately put in the service of blurring the Jewish distinction between Creator and created. Versions, in short, of dualism, polytheism, pantheism, paganism. That is something a bit more metaphysically alarming than Mr. Summergrad's summing-up of "a state of dialectical tension between rationalism and profoundly irrational mythic elements, each . . . informing the other."

Kabbalah, with all its brilliant structures and insights, nevertheless veers toward mystery religion—a conclusion I suspect Mr. Summergrad, in the light of his finding a "homology between the tasks and language of the Kabbalah and those of psychoanalysis," would perhaps not wish to accept. Or perhaps would: the tenets of Gnosticism (and mystery religion) make the claim that the unknown can be made manifest. Isn't that one of the goals of psychoanalysis? But here my problem is personal, and will irritate. Psychoanalysis as a "modern arena" makes me yawn. Coarse and reductive again, yes; but, looking for a "classic confluence between reason and imagination," I choose literature.

Ira Slomowitz overlooks the fact that my essay explicitly repudiates my old "call for a New Yiddish," on the ground that "language is the wineskin, thought the wine," and that any language, after all, can carry Jewish ideas. But by the same token, even an indisputably Jewish language can reject Jewish ideas. The socialist-speaking Yiddish that attempted to equate *Shabbes* merely with Saturday—one day like any other in the week—emptying it of its Jewish content, did that. There is much in contemporary Hebrew literature that aims at the same result: the

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use of Hebrew not as a carrier of Jewish values, but as simply another language in a world of many languages. This wholly secularized and modernized employment of Hebrew is specifically a Zionist construction.

When Mr. Slomowitz remarks that, for me, "Hebrew cannot express certain ideas, notably those of modernity," he is attributing to me a view that is exactly the opposite of the one I expressed. Allow me to call to Mr. Slomowitz's attention once more what my essay hoped, in part, to explore: that "Zionism as an Emancipation movement was itself cradled in the Enlightenment, and only provides a new arena for the problem of Jewish cultural allegiance." Against this larger horizon of cultural perplexity, there is not much difference between the Diaspora and a Hebrew-speaking Israel; indeed, with regard to the infusions of modernism, both are under equal pressure.

Though it is true, as Mr. Slomowitz says, that "Bialik . . . started Hebrew on the road to modernity," many of the new Israeli poets, writing in Hebrew, scoff at Bialik's legacy and court the vision and style of, say, Ted Hughes or Robert Bly or Denise Levertov. Nothing very Jewish there, though the dream of a Zionist state is realized.

## "An Immodest Agenda"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Melville J. Ulmer ["Economic Futures," February] says my book, *An Immodest Agenda*, deals with the nation's need for "civility, 'mutuality' [caring], rationality, sympathy, and good will." The last two are never so much as mentioned in my book. He faults my examination of the influence of Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick, and Friedrich von Hayek on conservative philosophy and the Reagan administration because none of these "holds a government position," which is like saying that since Marx is not on the payroll of the USSR, he has no influence.

Mr. Ulmer writes that I do not mention, much less discuss, several topics in a book he criticizes as too long (460 pages)—among them, he says, "regional economic rivalries." It is the subject of Chapter Seven. And so it goes.

I can only hope that the readers of COMMENTARY will at least open the covers of *An Immodest Agenda* to sample my discussion of human values, family, school, and community, to see for themselves what I did write—and did not say.

AMITAI ETZIONI
University Professor
George Washington University
Washington, D.C.

MELVILLE J. ULMER writes:

Amitai Etzioni's complaint reminds me of the response my young son received, many years ago, when he angrily called a playmate "a fat idiot." Tearfully, his friend replied, "I'm not fat!" And so it is with Mr. Etzioni. I'll readily grant, without checking, that he never once used the words "sympathy" or "good will" in his treatise. But he did stress the supposed need of the U.S. population for mutual "affection," "caring and being cared for," "shared concerns," placing itself in "the voluntary service of larger objectives," working toward "a higher level of commitment," etc.; and he did oppose all this to what he termed the nation's "excessive individualism." At any rate, I did not score his ideals as such, but did point out that he advanced no clear or practical path for their realization. And who could, when such a path is viewed in the Etzioni manner as a concrete plan for "rebuilding America"? And at what cost? On such dreams the noble Chinese and Russian experiments were founded.

As for Mr. Etzioni's discussion of Milton Friedman, von Hayek, *et al.*, I faulted him not for including them, but for equating their views with the Reagan administration's social philosophy, especially in the absence of more representative authorities. Nor did I charge that Mr. Etzioni's book was too long, but only that it said too little in the (relatively) generous space allowed

Yes, as Mr. Etzioni says, he did discuss "regionalism," but not in the context to which I referred. I


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cited six formidable and mostly menacing obstacles to peaceful community living today, which is of course one hundred steps below Mr. Etzioni's lofty image of "mutuality." The least imposing of the six was what I termed "regional economic rivalries," the topic he touched on in another setting. The others, including such frightening phenomena as violent crime and racial tensions, he doesn't even mention in his book, nor, of course, are they acknowledged in his letter.

No, I do not think that Mr. Etzioni needed additional pages for proper exposition. What is needed is a complete rewrite. For reasons made plain in my article, the count against *An Immodest Agenda*, as it stands, is that it is one of the most uninformative, vacantly pretentious, and boring books that have crossed my desk within memory.

## Peace & the USSR

To the Editor of Commentary:

At last, someone who really understands writes an article on "What We Know About the Soviet Union" [February]. Walter Laqueur, in his excellent piece, proves that the reason we are losing ground to the Soviet Union is the ignorance of the Kremlinologists both inside and outside the State Department. Mr. Laqueur's conclusion is that the Soviets have to live up to their "historical mission" by maintaining an "irreversible advance." The confusion and lack of unity in the West have simply reinforced this tendency of the Soviets.

I would like to add a few comments. The West has traditionally perceived Soviet leadership as monolithic, although there is much proof that such unity has existed only in *Pravda* editorials. Not even under Stalin was the government monolithic. . . . Now Andropov is re-Stalinizing the Soviet Union, which proves that he must have been in opposition to Brezhnev for a long time.

It is only natural that in any government there are conflicts, but there is one basic conflict that pervades the entire party and country —that is, whether the USSR is to pursue a policy of peace or war. The Soviets spend about 20 percent of their GNP for military purposes. In reality, they spend even more, because the best scientists and engineers and the most advanced technology are used only for military purposes. But there must be people, both among the leaders and among rank-and-file party members, who think in terms of raising the standard of living rather than territorial advances. Thus it would be prudent for the West to put forth a real peace policy.

There is not the slightest doubt that Central and Eastern Europe were perceived by the West as a corridor of Soviet aggression, to which they responded by founding NATO. The Soviets, on the other hand, saw this area as a territory of security and they in turn founded the Warsaw Pact. But in any event it is absolutely futile to attack the secondary growth while leaving the roots intact. . . . Therefore the West should propose the following to the Soviet Union: if the nations of Central and Eastern Europe were given the right to choose their government and socioeconomic system in free elections, then both NATO and the Warsaw Pact could be dissolved, and a massive disarmament effort could begin.

The Third World would support such a peace policy because in the process of disarmament it would receive more support. A consensus for this proposal within the NATO countries and between the U.S. and Europe could also be achieved. Such a proposal would actually offer the Soviet Union the real security Mr. Laqueur claims it requires and it would become a topic of discussion at all levels of the party. Thus not only a new Soviet history but a new history of peace would begin.

Eugen Loebl

New York City

## Pragmatism

To the Editor of Commentary:

I am afraid that Michael Levin mars his excellent discussion of pragmatism, "Why Not Pragmatism?" [January], when he recommends deemphasizing the "will to believe." I do not think that exclusive reliance on faith, or fideism (to use the traditional theological term), can be detached from the Jamesian corpus without great harm and distortion—it is what separates James from Dewey, and thus a true pragmatism from mere "instrumentalism." Mr. Levin does not deny that there is an important difference between William James and John Dewey, and I hope he would concede that we can learn a great deal about both of these philosophers by the description of that difference. . . .

If we can account for "truth" without specific reference to external objects, and some mysterious "correspondence" of those objects with ideas in our heads, then conceptual simplicity requires such an account. . . . For reasons of conceptual simplicity, then, both James and Dewey describe truth as the ability of an idea to guide us away from (subjective) shocks and toward (either practical or conceptual) satisfactions. . . .

Deweyites . . . observe that a particular procedure, the procedure of the material or experimental sciences, has done a great deal to reduce the shocks of those who benefit from its results. The natural sciences have made the world a great deal less "nasty, brutish, and short" than it was for Thomas Hobbes and his contemporaries, and this achievement, for John Dewey, renders that kind of science the paradigm of truth. Thus, for a philosopher with a secular bent . . . truth is simply what certain observable experimental procedures provide. It is what a natural scientist does. . . .

James, too, begins from the economical notion of truth as intra-experiential success—truth is to be defined by the actual working of belief. . . . Any sort of experience, any type of satisfaction, any variety of success is a datum for the philosopher, and the satisfactions of "religious experience" (about which James wrote what may have been his greatest book) are emphatically included. Anything that may ever have happened to anyone is part of the appearance that philosophy must seek to save. In this expansive view of experience, James arrives at his will to believe.

I am sure Mr. Levin remembers the illustration, from *The Will to Believe*, of a mountain climber caught in a storm at a treacherous mountain pass. He must leap across an abyss to save himself, for to attempt to go back the way he came is impossible, and to stay where he is means he will perish. Yet it is not clear that he can make the leap—he might fall into the abyss. In this instance, the only sensible course is to believe that the jump is possible, a belief that itself can bolster his energies and increase the likelihood of success. Thus, faith can

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work and skepticism can fail. So it is in matters of religious faith, in questions of overbelief. An overbelief is one that is accepted without evidence sufficient to coerce its acceptance at the moment adopted, but which can work, can *become* true, through the life it provides.

This fideism, this faith *in* faith, was at the heart of all James's work. William James was a man who wrote, at the climactic moment in a personal crisis, that his first act of free will "will be to believe in freedom." His own brand of overbelief, as he developed it in his later years, was polytheistic and panpsychic—and into those realms I cannot follow him. But neither can I follow Mr. Levin's tendency to read the will to believe out of pragmatism; for that reading allows us to accept only the narrower brands of pragmatism. If James is wrong in his bolder speculations, he is wrong for all the right reasons.

But I seem to have strayed from my original intentions. I wrote to praise Mr. Levin, not to quibble about an underemphasis of one element within his complicated subject.

CHRISTOPHER C. FAILLE
Staten Island, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

To understand pragmatism and the pragmatic maxim, "Test ideas by their consequences," it is necessary to examine and reflect on the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, the founding father of pragmatism and William James's mentor. . . .

According to Peirce, the "scientific method" . . . does not necessarily mean the use of the laboratory techniques of natural science to obtain truth and knowledge of external reality. For Peirce, the "method of science" also means the effort to ascertain truth and knowledge through an appeal to common experiences (events and experiences that are observed through ordinary means such as seeing, hearing, smelling, and touching), and reflection on this experience.

Let's say, for example, we notice that every time we throw a baseball into the air, it comes down. We want to understand this phenomenon. So, said Peirce, we develop an "explanatory hypothesis." If our hypothesis is correct, certain observable consequences will ensue. This is what both Peirce and James meant by the maxim, "Test ideas by their consequences."

How do we go about testing our hypothesis? Some scientists and philosophers (influenced by the doctrines of positivism and scientism) maintain that the *only* valid way to test the truthfulness of a theory is through the experimental methods of natural (or laboratory) science. . . . Peirce contended that there are other legitimate approaches—literary, historical, theological, and philosophical—to ascertaining truth; moreover, he insisted that his version of the scientific method was just as valid as the version proposed and used by the positivists. . . .

As in the case of Thomas Aquinas (who said that, by observing what occurs in everyday experience, we may come to see that God is real), Peirce believed that common realities point to the objective reality of a Supreme Being. Reflecting on common, everyday experience, thought Peirce, will lead one to acknowledge God's existence in extramental reality, even as studying experience will lead one to see that there exists in our world the phenomenon known as the "law of gravity," which explains why objects thrown into the air always fall back to earth.

Moreover, when Mr. Levin maintains that pragmatism is "not a metaphysical advance on commonsense realism," he clearly is right. For Peirce said that one must be a critical realist even before one can be a pragmatist.

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW
Arlington Heights, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Levin's "Why Not Pragmatism?" is a welcome rebuttal to the attempts of many continental and Anglo-American philosophers to deny the existence of any external standards of truth. . . .

Nevertheless, in the area of ethics, in which both classical philosophers and classical theologians have always been very much interested, I think Mr. Levin gives too

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much credit to that brand of pragmatism known as "consequentialism." An ethics which would be acceptable to "classicists" in both philosophy and theology is one which sees norms as coming from an acknowledgment of human nature, i.e., what makes a person uniquely human. . . . We are only interested in consequences consistent with human nature. For example, we are concerned with the greatest good for the greatest number *if* and *only if* that good does not sacrifice the natural rights of any one person for the sake of a collectivity. . . . That is why the prudence called for by ethics need not and should not be based on consequentialist / utilitarian / pragmatist assumptions.

Mr. Levin has opened up important issues which go far beyond the narrow confines of academic philosophy today.

[Rabbi] DAVID NOVAK
Far Rockaway, New York

MICHAEL LEVIN writes:

To Christopher C. Faille: William James's discussion of the mountain climber concerns not the will to believe, although James thought it did, but the phenomenon known today as the self-fulfilling prophecy. James is right, of course, that in human affairs believing that something will happen can be a precondition for its actually happening, so that the belief is self-justifying. But this is different from believing something simply because there is no possibility in this life of ever finding out if it is true *or* false. While the latter attitude does loom large in James's writings on religion, it is logically quite tertiary in his pragmatic epistemology.

To Haven Bradford Gow: Whatever Charles Sanders Peirce's private theistic convictions may have been, the historical residue of his "pragmaticism" (as he called it, to distinguish his position from that of James) has been precisely a belief in the omnicompetence of the experimental method. Since I myself agree that "philosophy of science is philosophy enough"—to cite an aphorism of the leading contemporary pragmatist, Willard van Orman Quine—I would defend the Peirce of contemporary reconstruction against the actual man.

To Rabbi Novak: I agree that consequentialism is a dubious basis for morality, and I may have given it too much credit in my essay. However, the only "human nature" I recognize is biological: i.e., the instincts we are born with. I cannot derive fundamental rights from this biological notion, but I should add that "human nature" even in my sense does put effective limits on the ambitions of social engineers by telling us what cannot be done with human beings. I thank heaven for small favors.

I also thank my critics for their praise and their measured tones.

## Shostakovich

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Shostakovich in Four Parts" [November 1982] Samuel Lipman gives us a very thoughtful discussion of the personal and professional troubles that Dmitri Shostakovich suffered because of Soviet cultural repression. There are two amplifications that I would like to offer which should complement his general argument about how Soviet authorities impose an ideological "line" on the arts.

Mr. Lipman is quite accurate in pointing out how Shostakovich felt it necessary to compose symphonies with appropriate revolutionary themes. The Twelfth Symphony was one such work, and it was entitled not simply "1917" as stated in the article, but rather "1917: In Memory of Lenin." Shostakovich's full title demonstrates Mr. Lipman's point more completely, that is, the degree to which a Soviet artist feels compelled to produce what is demanded by the official culture.

Even when Shostakovich composed non-programmatic music, Soviet cultural bureaucrats would provide the appropriate ideological gloss. For example, party spokesman Dmitri Kabalevsky commented as follows about the Tenth Symphony: "As before, I am still convinced of the symphony's profound truthfulness. . . . In the finale, moreover, he draws a bright picture in which we can clearly hear the pulse beats of wonderful young life liberated, at last, from the threat of calamities and suffering." Thus does the party provide the heroic optimism necessitated by the official doctrine of socialist realism.

Given the relentless artistic censorship and the more than occasional purges conducted by Soviet authorities, one can sympathize with Shostakovich even when he temporized with the regime. As he comments in his *Testimony*: "I was stuck with the label 'enemy of the people,' and I don't need to explain what the label meant in those days." In Stalin's time, it meant the concentration camp or execution; now it means artistic interdiction or banishment. We can only be grateful to Dmitri Shostakovich that despite all this repression, he gave us the remarkable body of string quartets for which he will no doubt be best remembered. But these chamber masterpieces came from the inner man while so many of the "official" symphonies were composed as the political tribute necessary for the artist to work—and sometimes to survive.

KEVIN V. MULCAHY
Director, Institute of
Government Research
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisana

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# HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH TO DRINK IF YOU'RE DRIVING?

**USING THIS CHART MAY HELP YOU KNOW YOUR LIMIT.**

First, you should understand that drinking any amount of alcohol can impair your ability to drive.

The generally accepted way to measure intoxication is by your Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). In most areas, the legal definition of intoxication is .10 percent BAC and above. However, long before you reach .10 BAC, your judgment and motor skills deteriorate rapidly. In fact, some states include the definition of impaired driving ability, which usually begins at .05 percent.

**Important factors to keep in mind** are how much you've drunk in a given period of time, how much you weigh and whether you've been eating. Your age, individual metabolism and experience with drinking are also factors. However, it simply is not true that beer or wine is less likely to make you drunk than so-called "hard" drinks. A 6-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce can of beer or 1½ ounces of 86-proof whiskey have about the same amount of alcohol and will have about the same effect on you.

**How to estimate your Blood Alcohol Concentration.** Although the effects of alcohol vary a great deal, the average effects are shown in the accompanying chart prepared by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Find your weight in the left-hand column and then refer to the number of drinks you have had or intend to have over a two-hour period. For example, if you weigh 160 pounds and have had four beers over the first two hours you're drinking, your Blood Alcohol Concentration would be dangerously beyond .05 percent, and your driving ability would be seriously impaired—a dangerous driving situation. Six beers in the same period would give you a BAC of over .10 percent—the level generally accepted as proof of intoxication.

**It is easier to get drunk than it is to get sober.** The effects of drinking do taper off as the alcohol passes through your body, but the drop is slow. In the example above, the person who had six beers would still have significant traces of alcohol in his blood six hours later.

**Even if you're not drinking, other drivers may be. Your best protection is still the seat belts in your car.** Accidents do happen, and wearing lap and shoulder belts doubles your chances of coming through one alive.

## DRINKS (TWO-HOUR PERIOD)

| Weight | 1½ ozs. 86° Liquor or 12 ozs. Beer | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 120 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 140 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 160 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 180 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 200 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 220 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 240 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |

**BE CAREFUL DRIVING BAC TO .05%** | **DRIVING IMPAIRED .05-.09%** | **DO NOT DRIVE .10% & UP**

Source: NHTSA

The chart shows average responses. Younger people generally become impaired sooner, while older people have more vision problems at night. Tests show a wide range of responses even for people of the same age and weight. For some people, one drink may be too many.

Having a full stomach will postpone somewhat the effects of alcohol, but it will not keep you from becoming drunk.

Black coffee, cold showers, or walking around outdoors will do nothing to make you sober. Of course, someone who claims, "I'll be okay as soon as I get behind the wheel," may be making a fatal misjudgment.

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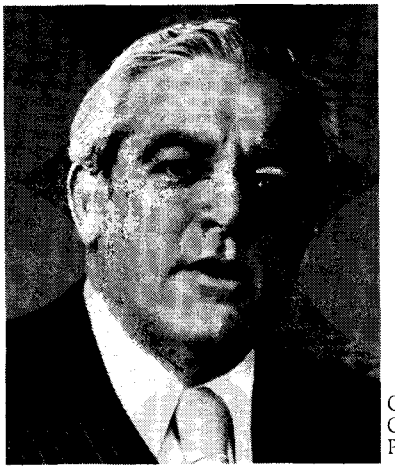

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# Our Obsolete Middle East Policy

*Robert W. Tucker*

CONVENTIONAL wisdom has it that American interests in the Middle East would be served above all by peace. Since the Arab-Israeli conflict is seen as the principal threat to peace in the region, a settlement of this conflict is considered to form the great objective of policy. A settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is taken to mean, in the first instance, a resolution of that part of the conflict that supposedly forms its core, or, to employ a familiar metaphor, its heart. Thus peace requires a settlement of the Palestinian issue, and indeed such a settlement is increasingly seen as roughly synonymous with peace. So strong is the persuasion that it has made a resolution of the Palestinian issue the Golden Grail of American policy in the Middle East.

The Reagan plan is but the latest manifestation on the level of high policy of what has become the received wisdom on America's Middle East policy. Although attention has been largely concentrated on the terms given in the President's proposal for settling the Palestinian issue, the real significance of the proposal is its assumption that a settlement not only responds to but is required by American interests in the region. Given this assumption, and the general view it reflects, the war in Lebanon was important in that it provided a new opportunity for achieving peace in the Middle East through a negotiated settlement of the Palestinian issue. "Triumphs of statecraft," Secretary of State George Shultz observed in the immediate wake of the war, "are decisions which join opportunity with action. If this opportunity is allowed to pass it may never come again." And the President, in announcing his peace plan, declared that the opportunity must not be allowed to pass. "Our involvement in the search for Mideast peace is not a matter of preference, it is a moral imperative."

The view that peace is the great imperative of America's Middle East policy may be traced back to the 1967 war. It emerged full blown, however, only in the wake of the 1973 war. The October war had shown, it was argued, the very considerable danger held out by a continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The war brought on something quite close to a superpower confrontation. It had provoked the Arab states to resort to an oil embargo of sorts. It opened the prospect of the displacement of moderate Arab governments by radical regimes. Another war, the argument ran, would almost surely raise these same dangers and very likely in a far more acute form. For another war would again provoke Arab states to look to the Soviet Union for support and to retaliate by use of the oil weapon.

Thus the great object of policy, it was concluded, must be the avoidance of a further round of hostilities. This required, in turn, such change of the status quo as would satisfy those who might otherwise again resort to war. America would have to preside over the process whereby the status quo was changed. Given its special relationship with Israel, it was in a position to help the Arab states in ways far less dangerous than the ways held out by Moscow. What Moscow could only do through war, Washington might do by virtue of Israel's dependence on American military and economic aid.

The 1973 war also marked the beginning of a continuing and persistent diplomatic effort to compensate for a declining power position. The heightened American diplomatic involvement in the region, the assumption of the role of mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, were responses to a sense of growing American vulnerability. Another response might have consisted in an effort to restore Western —that is to say, American—power in the region and, in this manner, to reverse a growing vulnerability. Given the circumstances of the 1970's, this response appeared out of the question. Nor was it ever seriously considered. Instead, the policy followed was one of searching for effective substitutes for American power. The Shah's Iran was one such substitute. Another was the new American role of mediator.

Henry Kissinger was the architect of this new role. In his hands, it was expressed by a diplomacy that remained quite modest in aspiration and that held out no grand design for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. While flirting on occasion with the Palestinian issue, Kissinger never squarely addressed it and gave little indication that he con-

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sidered it productive to do so. The power to wage a serious war resided with the Egyptians and Syrians, not the Palestinians. This being the case, it was Egyptian and Syrian, rather than Palestinian, grievances that received his attention and effort. Kissinger's diplomacy reflected the assumption that those states able to wage a serious war, and to raise the dangers he was determined to avoid, were likely to do so only for their more narrowly defined interests and not for the interests of the Arab nation as symbolized by the Palestinians. If this were so, of what use would it be for him to invest valuable diplomatic capital in a cause that represented the most intractable part of the Arab-Israeli conflict? Subsequent developments were to afford a striking confirmation of this assessment.

What was to prove enduring in the policy Kissinger had initiated was neither his view of the conflict nor his diplomatic design, at once more profound and more modest than that of his successors, but the fears that prompted his policy in the first place. While the Carter administration fully shared these fears, and added a number of its own, it rejected Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy of partial solutions and substituted a diplomacy intent on achieving a comprehensive settlement.

The significance of the change was far-reaching. It meant that henceforth any progress toward a settlement would depend on prior inter-Arab agreement. On the Arab side, then, progress toward a settlement would remain at the mercy of the most intransigent party or parties. It also meant that what had previously been a peripheral issue would be so no longer. A diplomacy intent on achieving a comprehensive settlement not only had to address the Palestinian issue, it had to make that issue its central concern. For the Palestinian issue, unlike other issues, could not be considered in the conventional category of state interest. It formed the one tangible common cause of the Arab world. It was, as no other issue was, synonymous with the meaning and integrity of the commitment to the Arab nation. Arab states might be increasingly disposed in practice to subordinate a waning vision of pan-Arabism to their separate reasons of state, but they were still quite unprepared to do so openly. A profession of faithfulness to the common cause, embodied in the Palestinian issue, was still a determinant of legitimacy in the Arab world just as it was still a useful weapon to employ against political opponents who could plausibly be accused of betraying this cause. Thus a diplomacy intent on achieving a comprehensive settlement had to deal above all with the Palestinian issue. Even if its intrinsic significance did not merit considering it the heart of the conflict, this diplomacy could have no other effect than to make of it the heart.

The policy of seeking a comprehensive peace was adopted in the main because of what were considered to be the all too meager results of step-by-step diplomacy. Kissinger's diplomacy did not assume that peace as such was attainable, only the promise of a reasonable stability. It was a policy of incrementalism, that played for time in the hope that initially profound differences between adversaries might be narrowed while an increasing measure of trust and confidence might be established. Kissinger's successors were at once more pessimistic and more optimistic. They were more pessimistic in their estimate of the future if substantial progress were not quickly made in moving toward a comprehensive settlement. But this pessimism was balanced by greater optimism over the prospects of reaching such a settlement.

The optimism about America's ability to engineer a comprehensive settlement had no apparent basis in political reality. Nevertheless, once it was given policy expression it was destined to persist.

## II

THE view that American interests require pursuing a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict has never been supported by events. No sooner had it been accepted than the Sadat initiative and the separate peace to which this initiative ultimately led discredited it, or should have done so. The Egyptian move evidently overthrew the assumption, once taken virtually as axiomatic, that just as the Arab states could only make war together, they also could only make peace together. In the aftermath of Camp David, those who nevertheless continued to cling to this assumption predicted that a separate peace between Egypt and Israel would not hold. Even if it did, they went on to argue, it merely proved that Egypt was the only Arab state that could undertake to make a separate peace. Yet the peace has held. Moreover, the Egyptian "exception" makes up, in terms of power, half of the rule. Even then, the argument is unpersuasive. There is nothing to prevent Syria from doing what Egypt has done, at least provided that Syria can get from Israel a territorial settlement roughly comparable to the settlement Egypt has been able to get.

The peace between Egypt and Israel changed nearly all the equations of Middle East strategy. It all but ruled out a repetition of 1973, not only in the literal sense but in the sense of a future conflict that might set the Arab world as much at odds with Washington as the 1973 war had done. For it was now altogether unlikely that Israel would again find itself in the position it had been in then. Equally, it was altogether unlikely that the United States would again find itself in a similar position to that of 1973. Another round of conflict, it seemed only reasonable to conclude, would not hold out anything near as great a threat to American interests as policy-makers had assumed and feared in the period following the October war.

Yet this was not the conclusion drawn at the time. Although the Carter administration finally

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came to support a separate peace between Egypt and Israel, it did not find in this peace much relief from the anxieties it had earlier entertained. These anxieties were concentrated on the Palestinian issue and what were perceived to be the links between this issue, if left unresolved, and the threats to American interests in the Persian Gulf. In the American view, Camp David, by its treatment of the Palestinian issue, had not substantially diminished these threats. The Arab reaction to Camp David appeared to confirm this view. Not only did the Palestinian leadership, certainly the PLO, treat the results of Camp David with contempt, Saudi Arabia also greeted the settlement with a barely disguised hostility.

Rather than pressuring Riyadh to support the peace, the Carter administration drew back before the opposition of the West's principal source of oil. It did so even before events in Iran transformed the American pillar in the Persian Gulf into a determined adversary, thereby destroying the basis of a decade-old policy. In the wake of the Iranian revolution, what little inclination there might have once been to pressure Riyadh to support Camp David disappeared entirely. Instead, the Carter administration sought to compensate for the loss of the Iranian surrogate by shifting its attention and hopes to Saudi Arabia, a move that virtually precluded any effort to elicit wider support for Camp David. The Reagan administration not only continued this trend during its first year in office, but, if anything, managed to give the Saudis a position even more exalted than they had previously enjoyed.

In these circumstances, whatever prospects there were for movement on the Palestinian issue within the framework established by Camp David markedly declined, and quite apart from the interpretation subsequently given this framework by the Begin government. For Saudi support of Camp David was critical to the peace process. Without it, Egypt was effectively isolated. Jordan could have but little incentive to join the peace process, given Saudi opposition and American diffidence. In turn, the PLO was indirectly encouraged to employ such means as were at its disposal to impede any efforts to implement the Camp David provisions dealing with the West Bank and Gaza.

Thus, anxiety over the failure to mark any progress on the Palestinian issue persisted, as did the reluctance to pursue a policy that might somehow relieve this anxiety. At the same time, the course of events in the Gulf did not support the assumption that linked the security of American interests in the Gulf with progress toward a settlement of the Palestinian issue. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the principal developments threatening American interests in the Gulf had no apparent relationship to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Certainly this was true in the case of the Iranian revolution and it appeared no less true in the case of the war between Iran and Iraq. To be sure, there remained other possible threats to American interests. Yet with respect to these other threats, all that could plausibly be argued was that the Arab-Israeli conflict was only one factor among many bearing on the stability and security of the Gulf. Given the purely indigenous sources of instability, it strained credulity to assign to this conflict more than peripheral significance.

The above points have been made on so many occasions in these pages that it is almost embarrassing to restate them. They are restated only because the veritable mythology against which they are directed has a durability that is remarkably resistant to experience. It is sobering though instructive to review the regnant policy assumptions of a decade. Nearly all have been disproved by events. Yet scarcely a one has been revised, let alone abandoned.

The assumption of the effects of a hardline government in Jerusalem affords a further example of this apparent triumph of dogma over experience in Middle East policy. According to this assumption, a hardline Israeli government must have the effects of provoking a hard (or harder) line on the Arab side and of opening the door wide to Arab radicalism. The Begin government clearly satisfies the commonly held vision of a hardline government. It has been in office for six years. Have the effects of its policies led to greater Arab hostility to the West, not to mention a resurgent Arab radicalism?

The question can prove no more than rhetorical. Rather than having had the effects that prevailing wisdom must lead us to expect, the actions of the Begin government to date appear to have had quite the opposite effects. The period of the Begin government has not resulted in the resurgence of Arab radicalism but in the modest strengthening of Arab moderates. A hardline Israeli policy—if such it is to be considered—has not led to Arab rejection of the United States but to Arab acceptance, and indeed encouragement, of an American role in the Middle East that would not have appeared possible only a few years ago.

## III

THE fifth Arab-Israeli war, the one in Lebanon in 1982, illuminated with a startling clarity the mistaken nature of the assumptions on which so much of America's Middle East policy has rested. Yet it also bore impressive testimony to the tenacity with which those assumptions continue to be held. On the morrow of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, those assumptions were at once widely invoked to establish that, however the action initiated by Jerusalem might turn out, it could have only an adverse effect on American interests in the region. Once again, the specter of Arab radicalism was brought forth. Even when it was acknowledged that the

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great fears of the 1970's—a superpower confrontation and an oil embargo—had receded, new fears took their place. In fact, the new fears were simply an amended version of the old, which, at bottom, were of the Arab world rising, with or without Soviet support, to resist with all the means at its disposal those who would not restrain an aggressive and expansionist Israel.

What has happened to the alarums advanced with such great assurance last summer? In almost every instance they proved to be false. The PLO has not risen phoenix-like from the ashes of defeat, now more radical and more dangerous than ever. Instead, since its expulsion from Beirut it has enjoyed no more than a precarious existence, and this it owes much more to Washington than to its own resources or to the support of its Arab brothers. The Egyptian government has not been forced to abandon the path marked out by Sadat; nor has the Sadat course been discredited. The forces of rejectionism and radicalism have not been strengthened as a result of the war, the case of Syria notwithstanding. The apparently favorable position of Syria today is the result of Israeli forbearance and, still more importantly, of American diplomacy in the wake of the war. It is the Reagan peace plan and the American policy toward Lebanon that have given Syria a position and leverage that appear in such marked contrast to the defeat, limited though nonetheless considerable, it suffered in the war.

Above all, the war did not prove injurious to American interests. In the Persian Gulf, these interests were quite unaffected by events in Lebanon. Once again, the famous link between the Palestinian issue and the security of vital American interests proved nonexistent. Elsewhere, the American position was measurably improved by the war, a result that was soon confirmed by the new deference accorded Washington in much of the Arab world.

The principal reason for the change is clear enough. The war in Lebanon destroyed any remaining Arab expectations that the balance of power could be turned against Israel in the foreseeable future. For over a decade, Arab oil and financial power had nourished such expectations. It had done so not only because of the belief that the sudden infusion of great wealth could be converted to usable military power, but also because of the conviction that this wealth, and the resource at its base, could be employed to gain ever greater Western support. But the war clearly demonstrated that the military balance is no less favorable to Israel than it was a decade earlier and that, if anything, it is much more favorable than before. And the coincidence of the war with a marked decline of Arab oil power, a decline that is likely to prove enduring, deprived the threat to employ the Arab financial and oil weapons of the credibility it once enjoyed.

The Arab expectations of the 1970's thus suffered the same fate as did the expectations of the 1950's and 1960's. Oil and financial power could no more be relied upon for deliverance than could the power of the united Arab nation. Now, all that remained to counter Israel was a power other than Arab power. That power, however, could no longer be pushed by threats; henceforth, it would have to be courted and perhaps even entreated.

It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that there are some lessons to be learned from this latest experience, and that one lesson concerns the significance of Israel for America's Middle East policy. Were it not for Israel, President Eisenhower once lamented, "We could form a viable policy in the area." In the course of the 1970's, the long-standing view that Israel forms the principal impediment to an effective Middle East policy found broad acceptance. The war in Lebanon has shown, as perhaps no other event has shown, that this view is mistaken, and that if Israel can sometimes be a liability in our dealings with the Arab world, it can be an asset of very considerable significance as well. To a degree that has seldom been appreciated, let alone openly acknowledged, the strength of the American position in the Middle East has been a function of Israel's power, just as it has been a function of the intimacy of the Israeli-American relationship. No doubt, there are limits to the use that can be made, however unconsciously and on occasion even unwillingly, of the Israeli asset. The consequences of Lebanon do not indicate, however, that these limits were exceeded.

## IV

THERE is little reason for concluding that this and other lessons of the war have been taken to heart. Quite the contrary, in the period that has followed the war in Lebanon, America's Middle East diplomacy has traced a thoroughly familiar course and reflected equally familiar assumptions. Although developments have occurred—of which the war, though signal in its importance, is only one—that should have prompted a far-reaching reappraisal of policy, Washington has acted with a striking, and depressing, consistency. It continues to respond to the same stimuli, worry about the same dangers, retain the same obsessions.

The war in Lebanon, it is true, was proclaimed a great opportunity. But to do what? The answer was soon forthcoming. It was to do what the received wisdom had long considered the great goal of American policy: to resolve the Palestinian issue. The opportunity to do this, as the Secretary of State insisted, could not be allowed to pass, for it might never come again. In recent months, the sense of urgency expressed by Mr.

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Shultz has become infectious and has been widely voiced. This is the last chance for a settlement, we have been reminded almost daily. Time is fast running out and, according to some, may already have run out for resolving the Palestinian issue.

This is not the first occasion that we have heard such warnings expressed. Time presumably ran out on the Palestinian problem several times before 1983. And since we have already been through a number of last chances on this issue, a measure of skepticism today does not seem unjustified. Although the policies of the Begin government in the West Bank have made even a partial Israeli withdrawal increasingly difficult, they have not made such withdrawal impossible. Nor does it seem plausible that many who make the contrary argument quite believe in it themselves. Instead, it is often put forward as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the government in Jerusalem.

Suppose, however, that the argument is well taken. What follows from this? Does it signal another round of war? Can it be expected to prompt a resurgence of Arab radicalism? Will it lead to the growth of Soviet influence and power in the region? Most importantly, must it place in jeopardy American interests in the Persian Gulf, and in a manner these interests are not jeopardized today?

Unless there are plausible reasons for responding affirmatively to these questions—and, above all, to the last question—why should the American government invest a very considerable part of its energies and diplomatic capital in pressing for a resolution of the Palestinian issue? Clearly, it will not do simply to assume that these questions must be answered affirmatively. This was indeed the assumption of yesterday and if a retrospective wisdom casts increasing doubt on the merit of that assumption, in the circumstances of the 1970's it was at least understandable. In the circumstances of today, it is far less so. Not only is a repetition of the 1973 war to be ruled out, the prospect that Arab states might credibly threaten a crippling oil embargo can also be ruled out. The overriding fears of the 1970's, the avoidance of which formed the great imperatives of policy, can no longer be invoked with any real semblance of plausibility.

At present, we plainly have much less to fear from another round of war than we once did, or, at any rate, than we once thought we did. Even so, why should it be assumed that a failure to settle the Palestinian issue to the satisfaction of the interested parties—assuming for the moment that this is at all possible—will signal another round of war? Of Israel's once active military adversaries, none remains save Syria. Another war between Israel and Syria is a distinct possibility. But it strains the imagination to consider either party now entering upon war because of a failure to settle the Palestinian issue, whether on the basis of the Reagan plan or on the basis of any roughly comparable proposal. If anything, in Syria's case the temptation to threaten war would instead arise precisely because of the prospect that the Reagan plan might form the possible basis for a settlement. For then, Syria's interests, territorial and otherwise, might prove far more difficult to realize than they are today.

The war in Lebanon demonstrated, if further demonstration were needed, that Syria will not sacrifice its blood and treasure to vindicate the cause of the Palestinians. The war demonstrated as well that what the Syrians will not do, no other Arab state will do. On the Arab side, the Palestinian issue can no longer form the effective cause of war with Israel; it can only be used as the pretext for a war entered into for other reasons. If these other reasons persist, they will do so quite apart from whether or not there is a settlement of the Palestinian issue. So, too, the opportunities for Soviet intervention in the region will have little relation to the status of the Palestinian issue. Syria apart, these opportunities must be seen in terms of developments in the Persian Gulf, and particularly in Iran. However they are assessed, it is very difficult to see why or how they would depend on the outcome of the Palestinian problem.

THE conclusion these considerations point to takes on added force when the obstacles attending a settlement of the Palestinian issue are again recalled. The point cannot be made too often that the Palestinian issue is not a normal diplomatic issue and the conflict it represents is not a conventional inter-state conflict. Even if it could be assimilated to such a conflict, the prospects for its successful resolution today would not be promising. In this respect, we need to remind ourselves of the circumstances attending, and making possible, the peace settlement between Egypt and Israel.

The success achieved at Camp David was not primarily the result of American efforts. Although this government ultimately played a significant role in facilitating the outcome, it could do so only because the Egyptian and Israeli governments had already decided that the gains they could expect from peace outweighed the sacrifices entailed in making peace. Had this essential determination not been made by both governments prior to Camp David, there would have been no peace. Nor is it necessary to ask which party made the greater sacrifice and which received the greater gain. No conflict-settlement involves a precise symmetry of sacrifice and gain. What is required for such a settlement is not an equality of gain and loss, but the persuasion of both parties of a gain that outweighs the loss. Then, and only then, can a third party facilitate a settlement that otherwise might not have been achieved, or that might have been far more difficult to achieve. For even in these circumstances, the two parties will usual-

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ly need a third party to whom "concessions" can be made that they are unable to make directly to each other.

Clearly, the circumstances that made the Egyptian-Israeli settlement possible do not at present exist with respect to the Palestinian issue. If they did, we might not unreasonably expect to play a role roughly comparable to the role we earlier played. Since circumstances rule this out, in the Palestinian case we can only choose between a relative passivity and an activism that has no easily definable limits. The Reagan administration, by virtue of the President's peace plan, has taken the latter course. The American government, in the person of the President, has committed its prestige to achieving a satisfactory settlement of the Palestinian issue and, since doing so this past September, has already invested a considerable amount of diplomatic capital in the enterprise.

In the Lebanese negotiations, the role and position taken by Washington can only serve to underscore further the importance that continues to be attached to a settlement of the Palestinian issue. The urgency that has attended our effort in Lebanon, the determination with which we have opposed initial Israeli efforts to conclude a separate peace with the government in Beirut, the insistence that we have shown in refusing to countenance an Israeli military presence in Lebanon, and the apparent willingness with which we have increasingly moved toward acceptance of the role of guarantor of the peace there, would be very difficult to explain were it not for our continuing obsession with the Palestinian issue and our conviction of the importance this issue retains for American interests. It is an effort to maintain, if not to restore, our credibility with the Arab states —and, above all, with Saudi Arabia—that must account for our position respecting a Lebanese peace settlement. In turn, the need for credibility is dictated by the need to obtain a greater measure of Arab support for the Reagan peace plan.

## V

It is against this general background that administration claims to an activism with very clear limits must be judged. From the outset, the American diplomatic initiative was explained by administration officials as one that placed upon the interested Arab parties the choice either of responding satisfactorily or of running the risk that we would simply cease to concern ouselves with the Palestinian problem, with all the consequences this might entail. If the Arabs responded satisfactorily, the onus would then be placed on the Israelis and it would presumably be a very heavy one. If the Arabs failed to respond, the onus would be theirs by election. In either event, the risks and price of failure would not be ours.

But this rationale, as recent events have shown, cannot be squared with the pattern of administration policy, a pattern that betrays nothing so much as continuity with the past. The interested Arab parties surely appreciate this. They surely believe that what prompted the American peace initiative can also be expected to prompt new American efforts despite their unwillingness or inability to respond positively to it.

Yet what is the American interest in setting out on such a course? Even if a costly and prolonged effort were to end in an American victory, what would an American-inspired settlement of the Palestinian problem entail? It would not free us from responsibilities in the area. Instead, it must have the effect of increasing those responsibilities and of doing so in a very marked and unwelcome way. Having imposed a settlement on Israel, we would be obliged to insure that the settlement worked in the manner we intended. The Israelis would have to be given assurances of a concrete and lasting character against whatever contingencies they might reasonably fear. They would also have to be monitored quite closely, for the settlement would presumably be one that they might be expected to subvert if given the opportunity. And since we can only assume that Israeli power would remain a major factor in the region, the means for such subversion would remain.

We would have to be the guarantor, then, of a Palestinian settlement. What is our interest in undertaking so considerable and hazardous a responsibility? Surely, it is not to preserve vital interests in the Arab world, for the interests we do have in this world either cannot or need not be secured by a settlement of the Palestinian issue. Nor should it be to preserve our interests in the "other world," that is, in Israel. Although this is what we now increasingly hear in the 1980's version of "how to save Israel in spite of herself"—to borrow from the title of a well-known essay by George Ball—the attempt, however well-meaning, to save Israel's soul cannot form the proper object of American Middle East diplomacy. The Israelis must be permitted to save their own soul. If they should fail to do so, they will have to accept the consequences of failure, among which may be a changed relationship with this country.

## VI

A continuing obsession with the need to engineer a settlement of the Palestinian issue not only fails to respond to American interests and is likely to be attended by failure, it also diverts us from paying more attention to developments in the Persian Gulf. It is in the Gulf that our interests today, as in the past, are centered, and it is by virtue of developments in the Gulf that these interests continue to be jeopardized. Should the war between Iran and Iraq finally end without a clear victor, our interests

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would be best served. On the other hand, should Iran emerge victorious over Iraq, it would have established itself as the undisputed master of the Gulf. It is probably this prospect that should give us more immediate cause for concern than the danger of Soviet ascendancy in Iran. For a victorious Iran, however free of Soviet influence, would undoubtedly seek to settle scores with Saudi Arabia.

Thus the need to have a credible Western presence in or proximate to the Gulf remains. If this need appears less pressing today than it did at the close of the 1970's, it is not only because the contingencies then feared have not occurred but because the oil crisis has improved to a degree that hardly seemed possible only yesterday. In 1979, it was widely believed that by 1983-84, Western dependence on Saudi oil would reach a point that, to satisfy it, might strain Saudi production capabilities beyond endurance. In 1983, the change in the world oil market is such that if Saudi production were to stop entirely, the result would do little more than dry up the present glut.

Even if Western dependence on Saudi Arabia's oil should increase in the years ahead, the restoration of the dependence that existed in the 1970's appears altogether unlikely. The Saudi era has passed and eventually its passing may even find a response in American policy. Indeed, the day may now be approaching when the region that has held so prominent a place in American diplomatic concerns since the early 1970's will begin to occupy a far more modest position. That prospect can only be welcomed.

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# The Euromissile Crisis

*Stephen Haseler*

THE outcome of the great European missile debate, which will be concluded one way or another during 1983, will determine much more than NATO's European nuclear posture for the 80's. At stake is whether nuclear pacifism will finally make a breakthrough from minority status to official—though undeclared—doctrine throughout much of Western Europe.

Is it alarmist to see the current Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) dispute in such sharp focus? François Mitterrand obviously does not think so. It was, after all, extraordinary for a French Socialist President, whose party is a sister member with the German SPD in the Socialist International, to have intervened as Mitterrand did in the nuclear debate in a way that could only give aid and comfort to the Christian Democrats in the recent West German election. And, on the other side, it was equally extraordinary when such Right-of-Center figures as Franz Josef Strauss and Margaret Thatcher began paying tribute to the strength of nuclear pacifism by distancing themselves from President Reagan's "zero-zero" option. What all this demonstrates is that we are witnessing, in the INF debate, something rather more than the standard intra-Western dispute about nuclear tactics and strategy.

The fact is that nuclear pacifism, and the drive toward unilateral disarmament which accompanies it, are now a settled aspect of European life. Contemporary unilateralism is not a rerun of the transient outburst which occurred in Britain in 1960 when Bertrand Russell led a nuclear-pacifist movement which briefly seized the Labor party but was easily overturned the following year. Today unilateralism has a permanent hold on the British Labor party whose leader, an old "peace campaigner," will enter the coming election pledged to abandon Trident and expel U.S. bases from British soil and waters. Outside France, there is now no serious Left-of-Center party in the whole of Western Europe which has not been deeply affected by nuclear pacifism.

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In short, those who believe that a bit of fancy footwork, some marginal adjustments in nuclear posture, policy, or rhetoric, will once again work are misreading the gravity of the situation. Despite the setback nuclear pacifism recently suffered in West Germany with the victory of the Christian Democrats under Helmut Kohl, this time it will not disappear like a snowflake in early spring. As John Vinocur of the New York *Times* reported the day after Kohl's victory:

> For several West European analysts, an important lesson emerging from the West German election campaign and its talk of neutralism, pacifism, and drift is that Chancellor Helmut Kohl is not finished struggling with those trends. . . . Some officials, notably at the French Foreign Ministry, regarded the entry of the Greens into the parliament and the apparent leftward movement of the Social Democratic party as relative gains in institutional strength and respectability for anti-Atlantic Alliance attitudes.

TO ATTEMPT a satisfactory explanation of this development is certainly not easy. Even so, such an attempt cannot even begin without recognizing the fear of nuclear war that is now so much a feature of the European scene. For the sway which this powerful emotion has on so many Europeans is the heart of the matter.

A recent poll carried out by Louis Harris for the *International Herald Tribune* (published October 25, 1982) provides a rough measure of just how powerful this fear has become. The normally parochial European publics, beset even more than usual by domestic economic uncertainties, nevertheless all gave the "threat of war" as one of their primary concerns. In Britain it equaled inflation; in Italy it nearly equaled inflation; in France it came ahead of crime; in West Germany, surprisingly, it was not as high as in the other countries polled, but concern about nuclear weapons equaled the traditionally feared level of inflation; in Norway it ranked second after unemployment. Another interesting finding was that the threat of war was more keenly felt by every European public polled than by American public opinion. Although the point should not be pushed to suggest an exact correlation between fear of war and unilateralist sentiment, the fact remains



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that unilateralist sentiment is weaker in the United States than in Western Europe.

The poll also revealed that the "better educated and professional classes" were more concerned about the threat of war and nuclear weapons than other groups who seemed more at ease with the security status quo.

Those fears among the educated are reinforced by a growing tendency within the various West European intellectual establishments to paint the United States as in some sense the cause of present instability, and by extension as the primary threat to peace. Consider, for instance, recent remarks by Michael Howard, professor of history at Oriel College, Oxford, and normally a judicious commentator on nuclear questions:

> . . . When I hear some of my American friends speak of that country [the Soviet Union], when I note how their eyes glaze over, their voices drop an octave, and they grind out the words *the Soviets* in tones of gravelly hatred, I become really frightened. . . . This attitude seems to arise less out of any objective assessment of Soviet capabilities, problems, and intentions than from a dark visceral need to assert masculinity. . . . Whether I would encounter the same phenomenon in the Soviet Union, I do not know. But wars begin in the minds of men, and in many American minds the flames of war seem to have taken a very firm hold.

Unilateralist gurus also play remorselessly upon the fear of war. It is, after all, their primary "card" in the propaganda battle. They have developed a new and powerful fear-inducing proposition. It is the concept of the target. Evidently if one lives near a U.S. military base which is to install cruise or Pershing 2 missiles, one becomes a "target" for a Soviet first strike. This is the main propaganda weapon of the women who are at present ringing the RAF/USAF base at Greenham Common in England. And the notion of the target is broadened out to include all the West European nations which have nuclear weapons—either U.S. or independently controlled—on their territory or in their waters.

Little does it matter that this idea directly contradicts other unilateralist themes—such as the proposition that any nuclear exchange will cause general devastation, or the argument that only the West is committed to a first-strike strategy; the message evidently succeeds in frightening many of the local inhabitants.

The Soviet propaganda apparatus helps too. Dr. Philip Towle of Cambridge University, who has just helped complete a major work on European unilateralism, has argued persuasively that "Western unilateralism is based upon the fear of nuclear war, and the more intransigently the Soviet Union behaves, the greater the fear will be." Hence, when Georgi Arbatov (director of Moscow's Institute of USA and Canada Studies) compares the proposed cruise and Pershing 2 deployment with the Soviet missile installation in Cuba in 1962, and when Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov states that "West European countries would suffer retaliation if the deployed weapons were put into operation by their master," they well know the reaction they are likely to evoke.

As Vladimir Bukovsky has said: "Fear is a paralyzing and deranging force. So deranging as to lead some people to advocate the abolition of the police because the criminals are becoming too aggressive."

But why have so many West Europeans suddenly become so fearful of war *now*? The answer cannot possibly be the actual existence of nuclear weapons. After all, the peoples of the West have been living with nuclear stockpiles and delivery systems for three decades without yielding to unilateralist sentiment. Certainly the nuclear arsenals on both sides are now frighteningly high, but the potential destruction involved in any general nuclear exchange was surely as great in the 60's and 70's as it is now.

Is the answer then to be found in a new moral sensibility about the existence of nuclear weapons, one that was either absent or stunted in the 50's and 60's? This would be an extremely difficult argument to sustain. No doubt Christian churchmen—both Protestant and Catholic—are today more exercised by the moral question than was the case in the immediate postwar decades. However, while the influence of pronouncements by religious leaders about the moral validity of possessing nuclear weapons should not be underestimated, there is little evidence that either elite or general European opinion is any more affected by church leadership (or indeed by pacifism derived from an interpretation of Christian teaching) now than was the case twenty years ago. Also, how does one explain the fact that it is in the United States—where moral concerns tend to infuse public policy more than in Western Europe—that unilateralist and pacifist sentiment is at its weakest?

Nor can the newly inordinate fear of nuclear war be explained by anxiety over NATO nuclear strategy in the European theater. For almost thirty years, NATO strategy has been based on the "first use" of nuclear weapons by NATO forces in the event of a Soviet attack upon Western Europe which could not be contained by conventional means. Thus in 1954 General Alfred Gruenther stated: "We have determined that our strategy in the center requires the use of atomic weapons whether the enemy uses them or not and we must use atomic bombs to redress the imbalance between their forces and ours."

There has always been a rumbling discontent with this posture. But primarily because no one has been seriously prepared to advocate the necessary conventional arms build-up which would render it redundant, this first-use declaratory po-

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sition, although not liked, has at least been widely tolerated and understood as part of an acceptable strategy of deterrence.

Yet, all of a sudden (so to speak), first use has become a great public issue. Soviet propaganda makes a great play of it. Eminent Americans—McGeorge Bundy, George Kennan, and Robert McNamara—proclaim that they wish us to renounce it, and voices in Europe are raised in agreement. If the doctrine of first use, which has served us well for over thirty years, was acceptable ten years ago, why should it suddenly lose its previous validity? And particularly so in a period when Soviet conventional superiority in Europe is still an accepted fact. What, again, is new? The answer surely lies elsewhere than in anxiety over the doctrine itself.

Along with a sudden interest in first-use doctrine there has also lately developed a critique of the West's possession of battlefield (or tactical) nuclear weapons. My own party, the Social Democrats in Britain (SDP), has recently advocated a unilateral NATO commitment to remove all such weapons from Europe. As a first step it has endorsed the proposal suggested by the grandly titled Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues (ICDSI)—a body on which such worthies as Sweden's Olof Palme and the Soviet Union's Georgi Arbatov sat alongside the SDP's own David Owen—of a zone of 95 miles each side of the East/West divide from which battlefield nuclear weapons would be banned.

The rationale behind this proposal is that the pressure to use these weapons relatively early in any conflict would be great and consequently their existence lowers the nuclear threshold and makes escalation to nuclear war more likely. This may be a perfectly plausible proposition. But again, why now? Do these weapons pose a greater threat of escalation today than they did only yesterday?

Nor, finally, can the new fear of war be explained by heightened East-West tensions—either globally or in Europe. To be sure, the advent of the Reagan administration, with its anti-Soviet rhetoric, has made some Europeans a little jittery. But Reagan's rhetoric is no stronger or more robust than that used by John F. Kennedy when he was running on the "missile-gap" issue, or when as President he spoke of opposing any foe, aiding any friend in the defense of liberty. Indeed, Kennedy's anti-Communist phraseology, if used today by President Reagan, would call forth howls of protest across the West European continent. Yet Kennedy was a hero in most parts of Europe, and not only after his assassination.

In general, as we look at the period ushered in by the Berlin airlift, and running through the establishment of NATO, the Korean war, the reign of Dulles, the Kennedy confrontation over Cuba, the build-up in Vietnam, the 1967 and '73 wars in the Middle East, we find that East-West tensions today are if anything much less acute than they were throughout most of the past three decades. Yet the fear of war is greater today than it ever was then.

THE truth is that the new-found objection (moral or otherwise) to the existence of nuclear weapons, the contortions over NATO nuclear strategy, and the anxieties over East-West confrontational rhetoric are all symptoms, not causes, of the European fear of war. The new element in the picture, and true cause of this fear, is to be found in an inchoate, often unspoken, but very real belief that the superpower balance of might and will, which has kept the European peace for over thirty years, has, if not broken down, then been severely weakened.

The fact that the Soviet Union had become the preeminent conventional military power on the European continent was pretty clear following Yalta and Potsdam. However, after some queasy moments (or years), the American commitment to Western Europe through the Marshall Plan and NATO, linked first to the U.S. nuclear monopoly and then to U.S. nuclear superiority, was enough to reassure most Europeans and to refute the contention of the Gaullists and others that the Americans could not really be trusted to defend Europe. With the arrival by the early 70's of strategic nuclear parity between the superpowers, and the possibility that American cities would be put at risk in any U.S. defense of Western Europe, a certain new allure attached itself to the old Gaullist argument. Then came the American defeat in Vietnam.

That defeat reinforced those pessimistic elites in Western Europe who had all along claimed that the United States was an "uncertain ally" (a phrase which had already been used as the title of a Eurocentric book written by Tory MP John Biggs Davidson in the aftermath of Britain's humiliation at Suez in 1956). This "uncertainty" was based upon a host of arguments, some fanciful, some willfully anti-American, some serious. Among the more plausible was the assertion that a democratic system could not properly sustain protracted wars or indeed justify to its population (particularly its young) a foreign policy ruthlessly based on national interest. In any event, it was a supreme irony that the Atlanticist liberal intelligentsia in the United States, who supported U.S. involvement in the early stages of the Southeast Asian conflict and then turned on their own policy, should in the end have played so completely into the hands of the old High Tory Gaullists in Europe.

If the defeat in Vietnam was the intellectual basis for the new geostrategic assessment by European elites, then other American setbacks only confirmed the thesis. American infirmity in the face of the oil cartel—the consequences of which very nearly led to "Eurocommunist" administra-

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tions in some southern European nations and to a fully socialist administration in the United Kingdom during the financial crisis of 1976—accompanied the full unfolding of the Vietnam tragedy. The debacle in Iran, which led to the electoral defeat of yet another U.S. President, also took its toll of European confidence in U.S. will. So too did the inexplicable decision of President Carter to cancel the neutron-bomb project after both German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and British Prime Minister James Callaghan, much to their internal political discomfiture, had gone on public record in favor of deploying the weapon.

None of this is meant to suggest that the United States had in reality become an "uncertain ally" to the Europeans. Exactly the opposite was, and is, the case. America, during its period of infirmity, maintained all its commitments to Western Europe both in terms of declaratory policy and in defense expenditures and military presence. While the United States was grappling with the seemingly intractable problem of reconciling itself as a superpower to itself as a mass democracy, it was the Europeans who became the "uncertain ally."

For confronted with American difficulties, the Europeans reacted with a new search for a separate identity which has seriously eroded the Atlanticist position in every major West European political party without putting anything solid in its place. Thus even though West European federal or confederal union remains as distant a prospect as ever, and any serious European defense cooperation outside the NATO framework is still unworkable, not one important West European government leader, including Mrs. Thatcher, can be found who rejects the process of "European political cooperation"—that is, the attempt to define a European foreign policy which differs from that of the United States. As Hedley Bull of Oxford puts it:

> The growth in West European restiveness with American leadership, expressed most strongly in the European nuclear disarmament movement, but affecting also a much wider spectrum of opinion, makes some element of disengagement from American policy a political imperative for all West European governments, whether they feel this to be necessary for themselves or not.

Anti-American agitation in the streets of West European capitals is nothing new; nor is the simplistic anti-Americanism of the European New Left. What is new is the overt anti-American animus from more respectable quarters which has accompanied this search for a separate West European identity. I quoted earlier the astonishing remarks of Professor Michael Howard about "some of my American friends." Similar sentiments are on many establishment lips these days. They are not only an aspect of traditional European resentment of American world influence; nor are they merely the product of straightforward cultural antagonism (although the echoes of J.J. Servan-Schreiber's *The American Challenge* still reverberate). There is a genuine and quite sincere anxiety on the part of European conservative traditionalists about President Reagan and his advisers. European elites feel somewhat isolated and neglected now that the traditional U.S. foreign-policy establishment which they were comfortable with, and which catered to their sensibilities so fulsomely, has largely been replaced.

Whatever its sources, this establishment hostility has the (often unintended) consequence of encouraging the view that the United States is the principal threat to peace. As for the Soviet Union, it is seen in these establishment circles not as peace-loving but as essentially a state like all others: conservative (some even say "decadent"), careful, traditional, only adventurous or aggressive if invited to be so by a power vacuum, and even then not necessarily offensive in character.

Anti-American sentiment together with a relaxed view of the Soviet Union are the principal foundations of the developing European accommodationist psychology and strategy. Indeed, accommodationist sentiment, not only as a harsh reality or as the lesser of two awkward choices but as a preferred way of thinking, is very much the vogue. It is much more insidious than overt neutralism. The neutralist position is clear, unambiguous, and easily attacked. The accommodationist position is more subtle, slippery, and when allied to the cause of European détente (as is often the case) much more plausible.

The effect of all these tendencies has not so much been to strengthen nuclear pacifism directly as to undermine the resistance to it. Because the United States has been seen as a weakening power (in will perhaps even more than in military might), the pro-American forces in Europe have also suffered a corresponding loss of confidence and credibility, and this has made it all the more difficult for them to stand up effectively against the tide of nuclear pacifism.

But if so, why has the attempt under President Reagan to restore both American power and American resolve frightened the Europeans instead of reassuring them? In the pre-Reagan decade, as Norman Podhoretz has written, "Europeans could see that the balance of power was shifting from the United States to the Soviet Union," and they responded, "as nations always and inevitably do, to what the Soviets call the correlation of forces. They were tilting away from us and toward Moscow because the very ground on which they stood was tilting in that direction." Podhoretz put this in the past tense because he then went on to argue that "despite defects and deficiencies, the United States under Reagan has begun to turn the corner."

Yet the change in the American position in the

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world (real or perceived) since Reagan's election should not be exaggerated. Certainly there has been a welcome increase in U.S. defense expenditures; U.S. resistance to unbalanced arms agreements—either strategic or intermediate—is also a new, and one hopes continuing, aspect of resolve; there has been a fresh, and vitally important, change in rhetoric; the Vietnam memory continues to recede.

On the other hand, there have not been, to put it bluntly, any clear-cut American *victories*, specific events which are widely seen to "tilt the ground" decisively in America's direction. It is no part of my argument that the U.S. should seek such overt victories if this would mean endangering world peace. Even so, any slow, aggregated American recovery will take time to influence perceptions of the power balance. We are, in fact, and for as long as President Reagan's basic instincts continue to govern American global policy, only in the early stages of what may be a change in the "correlation."

This is why the plan to deploy the Pershing 2 and ground-launched cruise missiles on West European soil is so pivotally important. There is a temptation on both sides of the Atlantic to engage in another tactical withdrawal on this issue in order to placate the opposition and save what is left of the Western position in Europe. But to see the current missile dispute in this light, to think of the upcoming cruise and Pershing 2 deployment as a marginal and negotiable issue, is to display little understanding of the political and psychological dynamics involved in the contemporary European scene.

The missile issue is, after all, the chosen political and propaganda battleground of the "peace movement." It is the central plank of the Soviet "peace offensive" which seeks to decouple Western Europe from the United States. It is also the chosen political battleground of NATO itself, which in late 1979 took a fateful decision, at the prompting of the Europeans led by Helmut Schmidt, to deploy the missiles on European soil beginning in late 1983.

There is now no negotiable way out of this decision that will not involve a humiliation for the West and a consequent further destabilization of the superpower balance in Europe. The Soviet Union is not going to offer any reasonable arms-control deal in Geneva. It is simply not in its interest to do so. The interest of the Kremlin lies either in securing the kind of one-sided arms-control agreement which will carry the anti-NATO forces in the West forward to their next goal (probably the removal of U.S. bases and troops from Europe), or in reaching no INF agreement at all. In the latter case, the Soviets can hope that civil disobedience, such as is promised by groups like the Greens in Germany, will still prevent deployment, or that deployment will be accomplished only at the price of remaining a running sore within the Western European body politic.

For NATO, on the other hand, there is hope that deployment, by restoring the actual balance of power in Europe, will bring with it a greater sense of security and will therefore lessen the fear of war and simultaneously weaken the influence of neutralism, pacifism, and unilateralism. But even if the results are not so glowing, NATO cannot afford to lose the political battle over the European missile deployment, either by signing an unverifiable or unbalanced "interim agreement" or by unilateral European national decisions against deployment. If this should happen, the West will have been perceived to have "blinked" again, this time not in Southeast Asia but on its central front in Europe.

It is now obvious that all the pressure in favor of an unbalanced INF arms agreement is coming from Europe and not from the White House (though there are of course echoes of such pressure in Left-liberal circles in America). The INF issue is as good a test as Americans are ever likely to get of European resolve to take their full part in collective Western security. If the Europeans should fail, then Americans who suspect that the central problem in Western Europe cannot be rectified by a restoration of the military balance, and that something far more serious and ominous is taking place in Western Europe, will have had their worst fears realized.

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# Totalitarianism & the Lie

*Leszek Kolakowski*

THE validity of totalitarianism as a concept is occasionally questioned on the ground that a perfect model of a totalitarian society is nowhere to be found and that in no country among those which used to be cited as its best examples (the Soviet Union, especially under Stalin, Mao's China, Hitler's Germany) has the ideal of the absolute unity of leadership and of unlimited power ever been achieved.

This is not a serious obstacle to understanding. It is generally acknowledged that most of the concepts we employ in describing large-scale social phenomena have no perfect empirical equivalents. There has never been an absolutely pure capitalist society, which does not prevent us from making a distinction between a capitalist and a pre-capitalist economy, and the distinction is very useful. The fact that there is no such thing as total freedom does not make the distinction between free and despotic regimes any the less cogent or intelligible. In fact, the best examples of totalitarian societies are arguably closer to their conceptual ideal than any capitalist society is to its abstractly perfect descripton.*

There is no single cause on which we may place the responsibility for the emergence of a system which tries to give the state total power over all areas of human life, to destroy civil society entirely, and to extend state ownership over all things and all people. To be sure, power has always been sought by people as a value in itself, and not only as a means to gain wealth or other goods; this does not mean, however, that the phenomenon of totalitarianism may be explained by the thirst for domination inherent in human nature. The ambition for power and the struggle for it is practically universal, whereas the inner drive toward totalitarianism is not.

Most of the despotic regimes we know in history were not totalitarian; they had no built-in tendency to regulate all realms of human activity, to expropriate people totally—physically and mentally—and to convert them into state property. Whether the term can be properly used to describe some historical epochs in ancient China, czarist Russia, or certain theocratic societies and religious groups, modern totalitarianism is inseparably linked with the history of socialist ideas and movements. This does not mean that all varieties of socialism are totalitarian by definition. European versions of totalitarianism—Russian Bolshevism, German Nazism, Italian Fascism—were bastard offshoots of the socialist tradition; yet in bastard children a similarity to the parents is preserved too, and can be unmistakably perceived.

Socialist ideas emerged in the early 19th century as the moral response of a few intellectuals to social misfortunes brought about by industrialization—the misery and hopelessness of working-class lives, marked by crises, unemployment, glaring inequalities, the dissolving of traditional communities. In many respects the socialist critique of post-revolutionary societies clearly converged with attacks coming from reactionary romanticism and from emerging nationalist ideologies.

Socialism was essentially about "social justice," even though there has never been an agreement on the meaning of this vague term. All versions of socialism implied a belief in social control of production and distribution of material goods, not necessarily the abolition of private property or a controlled economy run by the state. All predicted that social control would secure the welfare of all, prevent waste, increase efficiency, and eradicate "unearned income" (another con-

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* Among arguments purporting to do away with the concept of "totalitarianism," the most absurd says that the Soviet Union is in fact a "pluralist" system since there are always various cliques or particular groups in the establishment vying for power and influence; but if the existence of groups competing for power is a symptom of pluralism, then the concept is simply meaningless, since all political regimes throughout history have been "pluralist" in this sense.



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cept of which there has never been a satisfactory definition). Most were not explicitly or intentionally totalitarian, and some strongly stressed the value of cultural freedom.

Yet in those versions of socialism that relied upon the power of the state to achieve a just and efficient economy, intimations of a totalitarian philosophy can be found, at least in hindsight. Thus Marxism was repeatedly attacked in the 19th century, especially by anarchist writers, as a program for unabashed state tyranny. Historical developments perfectly bore out this assessment. Paradoxically, however, the despotic nature of Marxian socialism was to some extent limited by that component of the doctrine which was prominent in its late 19th-century version, and eventually entirely (and rightly) discredited as wishful thinking: the notion of historical determinism, some of whose elements Marx had taken from Hegel and the Saint-Simonians.

For the Marxists of the Second International (1889-1914) the determinist faith acted, on the one hand, as a source of ideological confidence and, on the other, as a warning that history could not be violated. This was a natural basis for an evolutionary concept of socialism, such as that to be found in "centrist" Social Democratic orthodoxy. The crisis of the socialist idea which revealed itself at the very beginning of the 20th century was expressed, among other ways, in the (not quite unjustified) contention that if socialists were to rely upon "historical laws" and expect the "economic maturity" of capitalism to bring on the revolution, they might just as well bid farewell to all their hopes. There were those for whom revolutionary will and the political opportunity to seize power were all that counted, and they produced two totalitarian versions of socialism: Fascism and Bolshevism.

In both forms of totalitarian socialism—nationalist and internationalist—social control of production for the common good was stressed as essential. The model developed in the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist countries proved to be more consistent and more resilient than the Fascist or Nazi varieties. It carried out the total nationalization of the means of production, distribution, and information, pretending to have created thereby the foundation for the Great Impossible—all-encompassing universal planning. It is clear, indeed, that a fully consistent totalitarian system implies complete state control of economic activity; therefore, it is conceivable only within a socialist regime. Fascism and Nazism did not attempt wholesale nationalization—but then again their tenure was relatively short; the Soviet Union waited twelve years before incorporating agricultural production and the peasants themselves into state property. To this extent Fascism and Nazism were less totalitarian, insofar as they left segments of the society economically less dependent on state power. However, this does not at all imply that they were any "better" in human terms; indeed, in various ways Nazism was more barbarous than Bolshevism.

In both cases, however, the overriding ideology stressed the idea of social justice and proclaimed that some chosen parts of mankind (a superior race or nation, a progressive class or vanguard party) had the natural right to establish uncontrolled rule by virtue of historical destiny. And, in both, the seizure of power was carried out under slogans which appealed to and incited envy as the driving revolutionary force. As in many (but not all) revolutionary movements, what was justice in doctrinal terms was, psychologically and practically, envy. The immediate aim was to destroy the existing elites—whether aristocratic or meritocratic, plutocratic or intellectual—and to replace them with a parvenu political class. Needless to say, egalitarian ideological ingredients, insofar as they played any role at all, could not long survive the seizure of power.

No modern society can dispense with a principle of legitimacy, and in a totalitarian society this legitimacy can only be ideological. Total power and total ideology embrace each other. The ideology is much more comprehensive (at least in its claims) than any religious faith has ever been. Not only does it have all-embracing pretensions, not only is it supposed to be infallible and obligatory, but its aim (unattainable, fortunately) goes beyond dominating and regulating the personal life of every subject to the point where it actually replaces personal life altogether, making human beings into replicas of ideological slogans. In other words, it annihilates the personal form of life. This is much more than any religion has ever prescribed.

This explains the specific function and specific meaning of the *lie* in a perfect totalitarian society, a function so peculiar and creative that even the word itself, "lie," sounds inadequate.

The crucial importance of the lie in the Communist totalitarian system was noticed long ago (Anton Ciliga, *Au pays du grand mensonge*, 1938); it took the genius of George Orwell to reveal, as it were, the philosophical side of the issue. For what is it that the personnel of the Ministry of Truth do in *1984*? They thoroughly destroy the records of the past; they print new, up-to-date editions of old newspapers and books; and they know that the corrected version will soon be replaced by another, recorrected one. Their goal is to make people forget everything—facts, words, dead people, the names of places. How far they succeed in obliterating the past is not fully established in Orwell's description; clearly they try hard and they score impressive results. The ideal of complete oblivion may not have been reached, but further progress is to be expected.

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Let us consider what happens when the ideal has been effectively achieved. People remember only what they are taught to remember today, and the content of their memory changes overnight, if needed. They really believe that something which happened the day before yesterday and which they stored in their memories did not happen at all and that something else happened instead. In effect, they are no longer human beings. Consciousness *is* memory, as Bergson would have put it. Creatures whose memory is effectively manipulated, programmed, and controlled from outside are no longer persons in any recognizable sense and therefore no longer human.

This is what totalitarian regimes keep unceasingly trying to achieve. People whose memory—personal or collective—has been nationalized, has become state-owned and perfectly malleable, totally controllable, are entirely at the mercy of their rulers; they have been deprived of their identity; they are helpless and incapable of questioning anything they are told to believe. They will never revolt, never think, never create; they have been transformed into dead objects. They may even, conceivably, be happy and love Big Brother, which in *1984* is Winston Smith's supreme performance.

This use of the lie is interesting not only politically but epistemologically as well. The point is that if the physical record of some events and their recollection in human minds are utterly eradicated, and if consequently there is absolutely no way anybody can establish what is "true" in the normal sense of the word, then nothing remains but the generally imposed beliefs which, of course, can be again cancelled the next day. There is no applicable criterion of truth except what is proclaimed to be true at any given moment. And so, the lie really becomes truth—or, at least, the distinction between true and false in their usual meanings has disappeared. This is the great cognitive triumph of totalitarianism. Since it succeeds in abrogating the very idea of truth, it can no longer be accused of lying.

THUS we can see the difference between the common political lie and its totalitarian apotheosis. The lie has always been employed for political purposes. Yet trivial lies and distortions used by politicians, governments, parties, kings, or leaders are far removed from the lie which is the very core of a political system, the heart of a new civilization. The former are used (as a rule) for specific purposes, as instruments to achieve specific gains. The normal political lie leaves the distinction between truth and falsity intact.

From the history of the Church, for instance, we know a number of falsifications, distortions, and legends fabricated for well-defined goals. The "Donation of Constantine" was a forgery that legitimated the Church's claims to political supremacy. It was exposed in the 15th century by a great ecclesiastical scholar and has eventually been recognized for what it is. So too with many other legends which Catholic and Protestant historians have examined and dismissed, such as the commemoration of the Three Kings, another contrivance to bolster the doctrine whereby the Church claimed supremacy over the secular powers. Yet the Church has not rewritten the Gospel of St. Matthew in order to justify this legend, and anybody can look into the text and see that there is no hint that the three wise men who visit the infant Jesus are actually monarchs. The story remains alive as an innocent, folkloristic event.

During the last few centuries Catholic and Protestant cultures have produced a large number of outstanding historians who, far from employing various sorts of "pious fraud" to embellish the annals of the Church, have pioneered in subjecting Church documents to critical examination. They have produced many works of lasting value. (Where are the Communist historians of Communism who are worthy of such respect?) The Church has purified itself of forgeries and gained. But this has been made possible, in part, by the fact that the forgeries were aimed at specific targets—unlike the modern totalitarian lie, of which the ultimate goal is the total mental and moral expropriation of people.

The destructive action of totalitarian machinery is usually supported by a special kind of primitive social philosophy. It proclaims not only that the common good of "society" has priority over the interest of individuals, but that the very existence of individuals, as persons, is reducible to the existence of the social "whole"; in other words, personal existence is, in a strange sense, unreal. This is a convenient foundation for any ideology of slavery.

SO FAR I have been discussing an ideal totalitarian society, of which the existing ones are (or were) only more or less successful approximations. Later Stalinism (like Maoism) was a reasonably fair approximation. Its triumph consisted not simply in that virtually everything in the Soviet Union was either falsified or suppressed—statistics, historical events, current events, names, maps, books (occasionally even Lenin's texts)—but that the inhabitants of the country were trained to know what was politically "correct." In the functionaries' minds, the borderline between what is "correct" and what is "true," as we normally understand this, seems really to have become blurred; by repeating the same absurdities time and again they themselves began to believe or half-believe them. The massive corruption of the language eventually produced people who are incapable of perceiving their own mendacity.

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To a great extent this form of perception seems to survive, in spite of the fact that the omnipresence of ideology has been somewhat restricted recently. When Soviet leaders maintain that they have "liberated" Afghanistan, or that there are no political prisoners in the Soviet Union, it is quite possible that they mean what they say. To such an extent have they confounded linguistic ability that they are incapable of using any other word for a Soviet invasion than "liberation," and have no sense at all of the grotesque distance between language and reality. It takes a lot of courage, after all, to be entirely cynical; those who lie to themselves appear among us much more frequently than perfect cynics.

A very small and innocent anecdote. In 1950, in Leningrad, I visited the Hermitage in the company of a few Polish friends and we had a guide (a deputy director of the museum, so far as I remember) who was obviously a knowledgeable art historian. At a certain moment—no opportunity for ideological teaching dare be lost—he told us: "We have in our cellars, comrades, a lot of corrupt, degenerate bourgeois paintings; you know, all those Matisses, Cézannes, Braques, and so on. We have never displayed them in the museum but perhaps one day we will show them so that the Soviet people can see for themselves how deeply bourgeois art has sunk. Indeed, Comrade Stalin teaches us that we should not embellish history."

I was again in the Hermitage in 1957, at a time of relative "thaw," and the same man was assigned to guide our party. We were led to rooms full of modern French paintings. Our guide told us: "Here you see the masterpieces of great French painters—Matisse, Cézanne, Braque, and others." And, he added (no opportunity could be lost), "Do you know that the bourgeois press accused us of refusing to display these paintings in the Hermitage! This was because at a certain moment, some rooms in the museum were redecorated and temporarily closed, and a bourgeois journalist happened to be here at that moment and then made this ridiculous accusation. Ha, ha!"

Did he lie? I am not sure. If I had reminded him of his earlier statement (which I failed to do), he would simply have denied everything in genuine indignation, and he probably would have believed that what he told us was "right" and therefore true. Truth, in this world, is what reinforces the "right cause." The psychological mechanism operating in minds properly trained and twisted in the totalitarian meat grinder is a matter worth analyzing according to Leon Festinger's principle of cognitive dissonance.

LYING as a matter of political expediency is itself not a particularly interesting phenomenon, so long as it is a lie pure and simple. A minister says that he has not slept with a girl but in fact he has. A President states that he was not aware of what his subordinates were doing, but in fact he was. Nothing mysterious and nothing exciting in such facts; they are ordinary byproducts of political affairs. In totalitarian systems lying becomes interesting not because of its extent and frequency but because of its social, psychological, and cognitive function.

It would be very superficial to imagine that the lie as it appears in the Soviet press is a simple amplification and intensification of the normal political lie. Certainly if one wished to collect political lies, any issue of *Pravda* (Truth) or *Literaturnaya Gazeta* would do. Each issue is full of outright lies, suppressions, and omissions; and in every case the purpose they serve is obvious. They become remarkable only when seen within the grand machinery of education designed to build the New Civilization. The cognitive aspect of this machinery consists in effacing the very distinction between truth and political "rightness." By training people in this confusion and by inoculating them to believe that nothing is true in itself and that anything can be made true by the decree of authority, the machinery functions psychologically to produce a new "socialist man," devoid of will and of moral resistance, stripped of social and historical identity.

The art of forgetting history is crucial: people need to know that the past can be changed overnight—from truth to truth. In this manner they are cut off from what would be a source of strength through which they could identify and assert themselves by recalling their collective past. Not that there is no teaching of history (though apparently there was hardly any in Mao's China; there were no books available except for Mao's works and technical manuals). Rather, people know that what they are taught today is both "objectively" true and true for today only, and that the rulers are masters of the past. If they get accustomed to this situation, they become people without historical consciousness, thus without the ability to define themselves except in relation to the state—they are non-persons, *perduta gente*.

This mental and moral sterilization of society is, however, blistered with dangers. It works so long as the totalitarian regime, in dealing with its subject, needs only normal passive obedience. If, in a moment of crisis, it needs personal motivation as well, the machinery fails. Stalinism was brought to such a crisis during the war with Germany when the only way to mobilize the mass of Russians for defense was virtually to forget Marxism-Leninism and to use specifically Russian historical symbols and national feelings as an ideological weapon. An ideal totalitarian society consisting of malleable objects is strong in relatively stable conditions but very vulnerable in unstable ones. This is one of the reasons why a per-

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fect totalitarian regime (or "the higher stage of socialism") can never be built.

No matter how much has been done to realize the great ambition of totalitarianism—the total possession and control of human memory—the goal is unattainable, and not only because human memory is strongly intractable, or because the human being is an ontological reality; humans can be immobilized by coercion, but at the first opportunity they always strive to regain their rights. Even in the best of conditions the massive process of forgery cannot be completed; it requires a large number of forgers who necessarily have to understand the distinction between what is genuine and what is faked. (The crudest example is that of an officer in the military cartographic office, who has to have unfalsified maps at his disposal in order to falsify the maps.) The power of words over reality cannot be unlimited, since, fortunately, reality imposes its own unalterable conditions. Entangled in a trap of their own making, rulers of totalitarian countries try awkward compromises between their own need to be truthfully informed and the quasi-automatic operations of a system which produces lies for everyone, including the producers.

TOTALITARIANISM implies the complete control by the state of all areas of life and the unlimited power of an artificial state ideology over minds; thus it can achieve fulfillment only if it succeeds in eliminating the resistance of both natural and mental reality, i.e., in cancelling reality altogether. Therefore, when we speak of totalitarian regimes we have in mind not systems that have reached perfection, but rather those which are driven by a never-ending *effort* to reach it, to swallow all channels of human communication, and to eradicate all spontaneously emerging social life forms.

In this sense all Soviet-type regimes have been totalitarian, yet they have differed from one another in the degree of achievement—in the distance separating their real conditions from the inaccessible ideal.

It is fair to say, first, that in Central and East European Communist countries, this distance has always been larger than in the Soviet metropolis —that is, totalitarianism there has never achieved the Soviet degree of efficiency. Second, in the Soviet Union itself we have also observed a movement backward from totalitarian perfection, although we cannot pretend to know the exact meaning of this process or foretell its future course.

The slow but real retrogressive movement of Soviet totalitarianism has nothing to do either with a lack of will within the system and its ruling class or with a "democratization" of the regime. It consists in some reluctantly given, or rather extorted, concessions to irresistible reality. For obvious reasons, totalitarian states—fortunately for the fate of mankind, unfortunately for the generations who must live out their lives in the light of the most progressive idea—are inescapably and irreparably inefficient in economic management. Hence all economic reforms in Communist countries, to the extent they yield any results, go in the same direction: partial liberation of the market mechanisms, partial restoration of "capitalism." The omnipotence of ideology has proved to be disastrous in many areas subject to its rule, and so its power has had to be restricted. (Incredibly enough, Soviet ideologists in the early 50's managed to hamper the development of military technology by their obscurantist attacks upon "cybernetics.") The ensuing crisis of legitimacy is patent; as the state ideology becomes more and more incoherent, meaningless, and elusive, a desperate quest is undertaken for reshaped ideological foundations.

This does not imply that we may expect a gradual corrosion leading step by step to a miraculous mutation that will transform the totalitarian society into an "open" one. At least, no historical analogies are helpful in making this sort of prediction. As long as the built-in totalitarian drive, supported by the powerful vested interests of privileged classes, operates in the Sovietized territories, there is little hope for the kind of progress that one day would imperceptibly cross the line separating despotism from democracy. The examples of Spain and Portugal are not very useful here, both because of the different international environment in which those countries lived at the moment of their transition and because they had never been very close to totalitarian perfection in the first place. Indeed, if, giving rein to our fantasy, we could imagine a day when the Soviet political system were roughly similar to that of Spain in the last ten years of Franco's rule, this would be hailed by enlightened liberal opinion in the West as the greatest triumph of democracy since Pericles, and no doubt as ultimate proof of the superiority of "socialist democracy" to the bourgeois order.

STILL, a relatively nonviolent collapse of totalitarianism is imaginable. The frail hope for such a development was supported most strongly by the example of Poland in 1980-81. Among Soviet dependencies, Poland has notoriously been less consistent than others in its progress toward totalitarianism, all the monstrosities of Polish Stalinism notwithstanding. My strong impression is that in the early years after World War II the committed Communists in Poland were less corrupt intellectually but more cynical than was the case in other countries. By "cynical" I do not mean that they disbelieved in the Communist idea but that they had little "false consciousness": they knew that what the party was trying to con-

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vey to the "masses" was a pure lie and they approved it for the sake of the future blessings of the socialist community.

Nevertheless, despite all the efforts of the rulers, despite the overwhelming burden of organized mendacity, Poland's cultural continuity has not been broken. Throughout the postwar decades, any relaxation of political conditions, whatever historical accidents may have brought it about, immediately pushed the suppressed historical identity of the Poles to the surface, and displayed the glaring and incurable incompatibility between Communism and Poland's deeply-rooted traditional, national, religious, and political patterns. Historical books, whether printed in Poland or smuggled from abroad, if they were not tainted by official mendacity, have always enjoyed an enormous popularity in the country, not only among the intelligentsia but—especially in the last years—among workers and young people as well.

The months during which the Solidarity movement lived in Poland seem to have opened a new, unexplored avenue—whereby an inefficient and clumsy totalitarian system could conceivably be propelled toward a hybrid form that would include genuine elements of pluralism. The military dictatorship temporarily crushed the organizational forms of this movement, yet it has failed to destroy the hope. Indeed, the fact that the Communist tyranny in Poland no longer even tries to assert its legitimacy, and that it has been compelled to appear without ideological disguise in naked acts of violence, is itself a spectacular symptom of the decay of a totalitarian power system.

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# Jewish History and the Sephardim

*Chaim Raphael*

A NEW political situation has surfaced in Israel in recent years with the rise of the Sephardim—a term referring to Jews from the lands along the Mediterranean littoral and the Middle East, including the Muslim countries—to a majority position in Israeli life. This development has been the subject of a fair amount of newspaper coverage, but much of that coverage, as Daniel J. Elazar points out in the March 1983 COMMENTARY ("Israel's New Majority"), has been ill-informed or tendentious. Elazar writes that a kind of myth has been created to the effect that Ashkenazim (Jews from Eastern Europe and the West) are liberal and civilized whereas Sephardim (who are also known as "Orientals") are wild and undemocratic. Since the myth is untrue, and since in any case, according to Elazar, the Sephardim who helped put Menachem Begin into power mean to keep things that way—they now constitute some two-thirds of Herut-party membership, and the Likud coalition in which Herut dominates "is likely to become and remain the country's majority party"—it is crucial that we know who the contemporary Sephardim are and what may be the implications of their rise in influence.

Whatever weight one puts on the apparent political divide—which may not be as rigid as the clichés often suggest—the role of the Sephardi/"Orientals" in Israel is certainly a major factor; and one is likely to make more sense of it if one turns from day-to-day politics to the historical background. If the new majority in Israel, with its own set of attitudes, is going to exert a particular kind of influence on the country, the historian wants to know how these attitudes may have been molded by past experience, and how deeply they are therefore likely to affect the development of society in Israel. In effect we have to ask ourselves, in looking at the new majority in Israel, whether we may be witnessing a turning-point in Jewish consciousness.

Until now, the image most modern Jews have had of themselves has been dominated by the experience of Ashkenazi Jews—by far the majority of Jews in the world in the last few centuries. But in the long view this is misleading. As soon as one considers Sephardi and "Oriental" Jewish history, one becomes aware of an ancient world, almost a dream world, in which the drama of being a Jew was couched in very different terms.

At its simplest, the contrast is between Jews growing up in Christian and Muslim worlds. Those in the Christian West have an image of themselves which took shape in the last two centuries, at the crossing-point between Jewish social exclusiveness, unchanged in character for centuries, and entry into an open society in which the values offered (not always consistently) were those of political and cultural liberalism distilled in part from centuries of Christian tradition. This same tradition, to be sure, had maintained barriers against Jews which could be barbaric and murderous.

It was this which led some—the early Zionists—to turn away from Europe and work for a land of their own. Yet it was still taken for granted by these Zionists that the community they were striving to establish would enshrine the European ideal of the open society. A harmony was thereby established between those Jews remaining in the West and enjoying the privileges of emancipation and those in Palestine and then Israel where society was developing on the same lines, with politics and law conducted according to basic Anglo-American principles, and culture reflecting the highest Western forms. If the ethos of Israel could in one important sense be described as essentially Jewish, stemming from principles originally expressed in the Bible, politically the prime mover behind that ethos was the liberal idealism of Christian society, an idealism which had been felt with great potency even in the Jewish backwaters of 19th-century Russia, where political freedom was symbolized by England and America, and the revolutionary spirit by France. There can be no doubt that the creation of the state of Israël was an end product of the latent energy and aspiration of this Ashkenazi heartland, combining in a unique way an inward-looking concentration on kinship and an outward sense of participation in contemporary world culture.

Ashkenazi Jews have been quite content until now to see the Jewish spirit of Israel defined in

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these terms, since the Ashkenazim can claim such a numerical dominance in world Jewry. Their welcome to refugees from Muslim lands has, in fact, been in tune with this approach, in which the goal for the Sephardim has been to become in time, as it were, "Ashkenized." But how is a Sephardi/"Oriental" Jew expected to feel about this historically?

Perhaps the first thing that needs to be borne in mind in considering the Sephardim is the fact that from the close of the biblical period and almost until the dawn of the modern era, *theirs* was in effect the dominant position in Jewish life. In the early Christian centuries, long before the word "Sephardi" was used in this sort of context, the mass of Jews lived in what is now Iraq, Iran, Arabia, and the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean; and even though they soon began to spread further afield, the Jewish faith, expressed in ritual and learning, took its shape for all centuries to come from the Jewish authorities in "Babylonia" (modern Iraq). This position was intensified during the amazing expansion of the Muslim empire from the 7th to the 12th centuries. It was in the 12th century that the Spanish-Jewish traveler Benjamin of Tudela made his famous tour of the Mediterranean and the Near East, providing statistics in his travel book which indicate, according to the historian Salo Baron, that world Jewry may then have totaled between one and two million, "the large majority under Islam."

Even after the Western Muslim empire collapsed in the later Middle Ages, the Sephardim—including those in Christian Spain—remained dominant. It is thought that perhaps 250,000 Jews were living in Spain at the time of the traumatic expulsion of 1492. Nearly half of them found a brief refuge in Portugal, before being persecuted there in 1497. Then, in a sequence that constituted a partial and temporary remedy to these tragic events, the Sephardim rose again through the growth of the Ottoman empire, into which they were welcomed. The conditions under which refugee Jews from the Iberian peninsula moved to many lands —particularly in North Africa, Turkey, Greece, and Italy—may have been desperate, but they brought with them professional skills, trading connections, and a cultural legacy which dwarfed anything that had emerged at this time in the Ashkenazi background. The Jews in the Ottoman empire, though separate religiously, were intimately linked with the political and economic world around them, growing swiftly in numbers and prosperity. In sharp contrast, the impoverished Jewish settlements in Poland at the time had a total population of not more than 10,000 or 15,000.

By the 17th century, however, as the Ashkenazi Jewries of Eastern Europe began to expand, laying the foundation for what was to come, the world of the Sephardim, despite pockets of wealth and influence, had begun a decline into relative obscurity which was to intensify in the following centuries. By the dawn of the 20th century, four-fifths of world Jewry resided in the mostly Ashkenazi regions of Central and Eastern Europe. It is ironic that it was only when this Ashkenazi world achieved the triumph of its aspirations in the creation of Israel that the Sephardim returned to a significant position in Jewish life.

IN CONTEMPLATING the reaction of Sephardim to the modern situation, one must note that although most of them now in Israel derive from Arab/Muslim lands, not all of them do. The first community to transplant itself to Israel after the 1948 war was, in fact, the Jewry of Bulgaria, going back in origin to the 15th-century refugees from Spain and Portugal, and retaining its "old" Sephardi character in speech and customs. Out of 40,000 Jews in Bulgaria, 90 percent settled in Israel. The same original source lay behind the communities of Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia, which were heavily though not so exclusively Sephardi, and which produced more than 50,000 immigrants to the new state. And even within the much larger pool of immigrants from the "Oriental" lands of the Near East, there is an influence historically from the old Sephardim of Spain.

But the Holy Land contained many Jews who could be called "Oriental" long before the establishment of Israel. Some of these had lived there for centuries, others had been stimulated to come when Muslim rule in their own lands became particularly oppressive. There had been waves of immigration from Yemen in 1882 (coinciding with the *Bilu* immigration from Eastern Europe) and again in 1908, with Yemenite Jews concentrating in service and building trades, and in their own agricultural settlements. From Persia, where Jews had often enjoyed a rich and cultured life, there had been similar immigrations at bad moments, notably in the 1880's. Something analogous happened in Morocco in the 1860's, stimulated by the remission of a particularly crippling emigration tax on those leaving for the Holy Land.

Once in Palestine, Jews from these "Oriental" countries, and from the Balkan countries mentioned above, tended to live in their own areas, especially in Jerusalem, retaining individual religious rituals and folk languages, and remaining distinctive in clothing, song, and dance—to the great interest of ethnographers and the pleasure of tourists. At a more sophisticated level these early "Oriental" Jews were often financially solid and well-educated, constituting a "colony" of Palestinian Jews of considerable distinction.

But the mass inflow after the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 dwarfed all this. From Arab/Muslim lands adjacent to Israel, more than half-a-million Jews were driven in successive waves to the new state. Even when they had not been poor and disadvantaged in their homelands, they now faced hostility there of a fierceness that effectively

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prevented them from making any arrangements to sell or transport their possessions. The scale and character of this migration posed colossal problems for those who received them in Israel and attempted to get them started in a new life.

The historical transformation was extraordinary. Jews had lived in these countries—Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen/Aden—for at least two thousand years, and through all this time had been unwaveringly loyal to their ancient faith. Over so many countries, the political and economic circumstances in which they lived had varied tremendously, but there was one common factor which would now become highly relevant: the experience of living for so long in an intimate relationship with Arab and other local peoples and speaking the local languages as their own.

They were, in effect, not so much Sephardi Jews as Arabized (and Persianized) Jews. There was a dark side to this. To summarize: the Koran and the "Convention of Omar" had defined Jews living in Muslim countries as *"dhimmi"*—protected—but this "protection" involved submitting to a host of restrictions denoting a permanently inferior status, and the payment of special taxes. Though all infidel "peoples of a book"—mainly Jews and Christians—were covered by the so-called protection, the effect on Jews is easier to follow because of the unity and tenacity of Jewish memory. The restrictions on them were applied with varying intensity, but merely to list some of them is to convey the character of the relationship so entailed. Under the Convention of Omar, the *dhimmi* were to keep the height of their houses—and tombs!—low, to indicate their low status. In the presence of a Muslim they were to stand, and to move out of the way in humility when a Muslim passed in the street. They were not to ride on horses or mules but only on donkeys, and were not to carry arms. They were not to resemble Muslims in their clothing or hairdressing, but were to wear yellow clothes, girdles, and hats. They were not to have Muslim servants, or to be employed in a government position that would give them authority over Muslims. According to the strict law, trading with Muslims was hampered or forbidden, and *dhimmi* were not to serve them as doctors, which would give them power over the faithful. Sometimes the rulers were even more fanatical, like the Almohades of the 12th century, who turned all restrictions into a "final solution"—conversion or death.

One cannot ignore the broad oppressiveness of these rules, even though one knows that they are not the whole picture. Jews did rise in many places to the highest government positions, were active in trade, and were trusted as doctors and bankers. The top Jewish financial advisers—like the Netira family in 10th-century Baghdad—had immense power; and something of this kind happened in every "Oriental" country. Apart from the power that flowed in every era to a few leading families, there were whole periods in which the life of ordinary Jews was perfectly acceptable even in this basically hostile Arab world. The Jews were rooted in these lands, and content to live in their own areas, practicing some traditional trades (such as dyers and gold and silver workers), but found in every kind of occupation. In some countries, notably Iraq, they were often dominant in a large area of commercial life from ancient times onward.

Yet even Jews with great authority—like the vizier Abu Sa'ad in 11th-century Egypt—were liable to be executed summarily when envy or intrigue took over. As for the taxes on *dhimmi*, the most specific was a poll tax (*jizya*) laid down in the Koran, usually fixed at different rates for rich and poor, but still representing a crushing burden which Jewish leaders sometimes took over communally to avoid the punishment that non-payment brought. It would not be surprising if "Oriental" Jews had carried with them to Israel some old memories of the humbling, contemptuous status assigned to them in the world of their fathers, even if this is by no means the whole story.

How far back is the Jewish history of these lands relevant? It might seem enough for practical purposes to consider mostly the recent experience, going back only three or four generations, in which family memory is still vivid from the aged to the very young. What with the fearful German presence in North Africa in World War II and the Arab-Jewish conflict in the Holy Land, these last decades included bad times for Jews. But in transferring to Israel, they carried with them also some inspiriting impulses of their life as Jews running back further into their past and marking them out clearly in the predominantly Ashkenazi communities of Israel. Certainly the distinctive *cultural* history of Jews in Arab/Muslim lands has qualities uniquely important to any definition of what being a Jew means.

Even if the Jews existed within Islam under humiliating conditions, they had been liberated—indeed, transformed—during the early huge expansion of the Muslim empire, and continued to enjoy the benefits of the culture transmitted uniquely in the Arabic language even after the Arabs themselves had fallen, in the 10th century, under the rule of foreign soldier castes, mostly of Central Asian and Caucasian origin. The Jews first swept forward from East to West, reaching a high point in Moorish Spain from the 9th to 11th centuries, after which, to escape persecution, they moved across North Africa from West to East. In the course of this, their own Jewish life in all these countries was strongly local in organization, yet at the same time part of an open society stretching across the Mediterranean and to many countries in the East and North. It is of central importance that even after the Arab empire withered away, the Jews who had developed within it retained certain

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qualities of mind and culture which reflected the earlier symbiosis between Jews and Arabs and which became part of the patrimony of all Jews everywhere, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike.

It is not uncommon to find the rich cultural life of the Jews under Islam defined in the catchall terms of the "golden age" of Spain (roughly the 10th through the 12th centuries) with its roster of scholars, poets, and viziers. But this "golden age" would not have emerged unless Jews and Arabs had long been involved with each other far more strongly and creatively than most of us normally realize. I am not referring now to the presence of Jews throughout Arabia at the time of Muhammad, or to their influence on him in creating Islam, interesting though this is historically. In a much more visible way, the early centuries of Islam brought into Jewish life new elements which henceforth became part of the common identity of European Jews.

The eminent scholar Shlomo Dov Goitein has highlighted two factors of this kind—among many others—in his extremely stimulating book, *Jews and Arabs.** The first is the role of Arabic in developing Hebrew, and the lasting effect this had, reaching into our own times with the emergence of modern Hebrew. "The Arabs," he writes, "have always been fervently attached to their language . . . the cult of language being almost the sole content of their original civilization." The basic reason for the astonishing diffusion of Arabic throughout the whole of the world in the early centuries was that "the Arabs' enthusiasm for their precious inheritance so infected the peoples who came under their rule that they strove with all their might to speak, or at least to write it."

This illustrates a crucial difference between Jews and Arabs. The Arabs concentrated on language, the Jews on ideas. According to Goitein, it was unthinkable to Arabs that the Koran should be read in any language but Arabic, whereas "the Hebrew Bible was translated by the Jews themselves and for their own use into Aramaic, Greek, Arabic, and many other languages." With this different approach, it was not until the Jews became closely involved with the Arabs, "the worshippers of language," that they began to specialize in comparative studies of grammar and philology, which led in the "golden age" to a leap forward in the use of Hebrew, particularly for poetry, with a grace and flexibility that transformed the language for all succeeding time. It was in poetry, particularly in Spain, that the most perfect expression of Jewish-Arabic symbiosis was achieved: "A poem by, perhaps, Judah Halevi—graceful in form, unfailing in wording, forceful in feeling and thought —overwhelms the reader with the complete harmony which is the surest indication of true culture."

But this lasting cultural grace would not have found a setting in which to flower without a development that Goitein calls "the bourgeois revolution," which once again affected the permanent identity of the Jews. In the centuries before Islam, the Jews of Arabia and adjacent lands had lived, like those around them, in family "tribes," mainly on the land, with old skills, and only gradually moving into urban life to escape hardship. This quiet life, conducted strictly according to the Halakhah (talmudic law), was totally transformed from the 7th century on when, in the wake of the Arab conquests, the Jews began to move out of traditional occupations into a new and lasting prominence in commerce, banking, industry, and the free professions.

The basic reason for this, as given by Goitein, is that "in the upheaval caused by the conquests, a general movement of capital set in in all the countries between Spain and India." Treasures guarded for ages were thrown onto the market and sold by Jews and Christians; a piquant example is the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the ancient wonders of the world, bought by a Jewish scrap dealer and converted into 900 camel loads of bronze. Cheap labor became available for the development of industry in the newly burgeoning cities. Financiers came forward to help equip the conquering armies, to build roads, and to promote seagoing trade expeditions. There is obviously a straight line from this to the economic renown that some famous Jews and countless anonymous traders began to acquire in succeeding centuries. As one beholds the Jews in motion from North Africa to Spain and later with connections stretching into Turkey, Greece, Italy, and the Far East, one recognizes what the historian H.H. Ben-Sasson has called the "colonizing" role played by Jews in the opening up of Eastern and Western Europe in later centuries, and subsequently of the Americas.

Behind the sophisticated writings of the poet-philosopher Judah Halevi and the great religious thinker Moses Maimonides, then, one has to posit a relaxed "bourgeois" setting in which the pursuit of culture found greater encouragement than had been generated earlier by the narrow and exclusive pursuit of Talmud study. It was one of the accidents or miracles of history—one can choose either term or both—that those Jews who were swept into the expanding Arab orbit in these centuries were able to share on equal terms the stimulus of Greek, Persian, and even Indian cultures that fell into the Arabic language during and after the conquests and that flowed on from there to steer the European world into the Renaissance. The Jews played a very active part in all this; and whatever the ebb and flow in Jewish cultural history over the centuries, the legacy of a culture shared at some time with host "Oriental" countries established a sense of community very different from the isolation characteristic for a long time of the Ashkenazi background.

* *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages* (Schocken, 1956; paperback, 1964).

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Some of this legacy of belonging or sharing must surely be alive still among Jews from "Oriental" countries, refuting the notion that they pursued for centuries a separate, bottled-up existence, out of which they have only now emerged.

IN CONVERSATION with "Oriental" Jews in Israel today, one hears, behind the stories of uncertainty or hardship, the note of some special happiness and privilege that came to them as Jews, evinced in the joys of Sabbath and weddings, or in the legendary radiance of the great families—like the Sassoons or the Kedouries —that originated in the Near East and shed luster on all. This must surely enhance the historical image that "Oriental" Jews have of their own ancestry. And the sense of tradition which they draw from the world of their fathers can also be enriched at more sophisticated levels—as in the huge expansion of interest in "Oriental" folklore in Israel. In addition, a profusion of recent books has brought to life in wholly new ways the flavor of existence in these lands in centuries past.

One unique factor here is the opening up in this century of the treasure trove of the *Geniza* (store place), a vast horde of documents, deposited from the 10th century on, in a synagogue cupboard in Old Cairo and only properly examined in this century. The *Geniza* has yielded not merely ancient sacred texts but a vast range of historical and literary documents and personal archives—mostly in fragmentary form—covering business, community, and family relationships. The archives include such things as panegyrics and elegies on great leaders side-by-side with letters home from traders in far-off India; the whole adds up to a picture of Jews in North Africa as lively and sophisticated communities, passionately Jewish in observance and loyalty, but very much part of the wider world.*

In a different way but to the same effect, the daily life of the ordinary people of the "Oriental" world is also illuminated through a study of *responsa*—answers sent by renowned rabbis to questions put to them from far-off lands on matters arising in Jewish law. Thus, a scholarly work on the *responsa* of Rabbi Simeon ben Zemah Duran of Algiers (1361-1444) offers a very lively account of how Jews looked after themselves in trade, matrimony, public rights, and self-government.† It is clear from Rabbi Simeon's *responsa* that in his time the Jews of Morocco were relatively quite free to lead their own lives.

In sharp contrast, one also learns of desperate conditions in some "Oriental" countries. From faraway Yemen, for example, communal leaders wrote in 1172 to the great Maimonides in Egypt, asking how they were to deal with a man claiming to be the messiah. The Shi'ite rulers of Yemen had put before the Jews the terrible alternatives of conversion or death. Many Jews were converting to Islam; and the leaders of Yemen Jewry wanted to know if this awful situation should be looked on as pre-messianic—an age so dark that it had to signify the advent of the promised redemption. In his long reply, which is timeless in its Jewish validity and which became famous as the Epistle to Yemen, Maimonides warned against succumbing to fantasy. This was not the way the messiah would come; the Jews had to bear their trials calmly and with hope. To help in a practical way, Maimonides used his influence at court in Egypt to obtain a lessening of the heavy burden of taxation on the Jews of Yemen.

It is clearly a distinctive feature of the history of the Jews in these "Oriental" countries that there was contact and movement among them, transforming the isolation of individual communities. Sometimes there are high points of great significance for the future of the Jewish people as a whole, as when the pull toward the Holy Land in the 16th century took Joseph Caro, the great legal codifier of the *Shulhan Arukh,* from Turkey to Safed; and Isaac Luria, founder of Lurianic Kabbalah, from Egypt to the same magic town. One is also aware, within the total picture, of different attitudes to Jewish life in different countries, reflecting the way communities were influenced by the political and social setting. The degree of such influence is an issue which has greatly concerned scholars, and which overflows into the current situation.

One sees this issue operating historically over long stretches of time. In learned terms it is set out, for example, in a scholarly argument over whether independent Jewish self-government in 10th-century Egypt was a reflection of the determination of the new Fatimid dynasty to be free of outside control or a natural development from within the Jewish community itself in response to its own needs.** Coming to our own times a thousand years later, one sees the historic conditioning of individual communities projected onto their responses to the new world of Israel. Thus, studies indicate that the Jews of Iraq and Yemen, who come from a settled Jewish background, have tended to be stable, while half-assimilated Jews from the French colonies of Algeria and Morocco are more liable to be disturbed and aggressive.

One can apply similar insights to the cultural ethos of "Oriental" Jews as a whole, as compared with that of some Ashkenazi Jews. It would seem from the analysis of *responsa,* for example, that in medieval times Ashkenazi rabbis tended to be

* This is all documented in S.D. Goitein's trilogy: *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (University of California Press, 1976-78), with additional volumes: *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders* (Princeton, 1972) and *Mediterranean People* (in preparation). See also Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Jewish Publication Society, 1979).

† Isidore Epstein, *The Responsa of Rabbi Simeon b. Zemah Duran* (Oxford University Press, 1930).

** See Mark R. Cohen, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt* (Princeton University Press, 1980).

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very strict, while Sephardi rabbis were more "lenient." Some observers have seen an echo of this in the attitudes of extreme Orthodox Jews in Israel today; while young Sephardi students of the Talmud are pious enough, they are less likely (it is said) to participate in the violent actions of some Ashkenazim, such as throwing stones at Sabbath violators.

But if history provides an explanation of cultural differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, more important today is the power of harmonization. The pace of this leads one to reconsider the central issue raised at the beginning, namely, the effect of the new "Oriental" majority on the Israeli society of the future. That Jews of Asian/African origin (first and second generation) *are* a majority is certainly true, but according to at least one authoritative population study this percentage is due to fall, and on one projection may be as low as 46 percent by 1993. This would be due to a decrease in the Sephardi birthrate—which has already become evident—and the continuation of immigration from Europe and American countries.* (The "Oriental" countries are now devoid of Jews.) Of equal moment, the separation *between* communities is bound to become less marked. Ten years ago intermarriage stood at 11 percent; today it is 23 percent.†

Yet if harmonization—through intermarriage, education, army service, and the opening-up of political power—has proceeded at a remarkable pace, it would still be wrong to expect too rapid a disappearance of the differences that arise through "ethnic origins."** These differences, indeed, sometimes have an unhappy, even an ugly, aspect. The ugly aspect lies in the bitter reaction of Sephardim, especially the young, to what they see as economic domination by the Ashkenazim. The bitterness was visible in recent riots in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during which Sephardi youths scrawled swastikas on cars, and spelled out the hated word Ashkenazi in two parts: ASHKE—NAZI. In the view of a prominent Israeli educator, this bitterness is not only economic but reflects a real sense of spiritual deprivation for which Ashkenazim may be responsible:

> Nearly every thinking Israeli of the older generation now admits that in the imposition of an "Israeli character" through the school system in the 50's and 60's, something very precious was lost, with the negation of tradition and the pouring of scorn on the religious and cultural values and customs of Sephardi communities.††

But if the uprooting from old traditions can take an ugly form, there are positive feelings deriving from "ethnic origins" as well. One is aware in Israel of an even greater concentration than hitherto on the cultural heritage of the Sephardim in song, dance, poetry, and painting. But this, though welcome, is peripheral to the central need. Within Israel, and outside, some transformation is called for in which the pride of the Sephardi heritage is given the weight it deserves in Jewish self-consciousness. Something of this kind has happened in the Ashkenazi world, not merely in scholarship but in popular art, from *Fiddler on the Roof* to the stories of I.B. Singer. The Sephardi expression will be different by definition, but equally important to the Jewish consciousness of our time.

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* Roberto Bachi, *The Population of Israel* (Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1974). The fall in fertility rate is striking. As defined in the study, it fell for Jews born in Asian/African countries from 6.09 in 1950-53 to 3.75 in 1972-75. For all Israel, the figure in 1972-75 was 3.17. (For Muslims in Israel, the figure was 8.2!)

† These figures were given by President Yitzhak Navon (himself a Sephardi), in an interview in the *Jewish Chronicle* (London), December 10, 1982.

** The accelerating trend toward harmonization is documented by S. Smooha in *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (University of California Press, 1978), though economic and social inequalities remain formidable.

†† Quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle* (London), January 21, 1983.

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# Interrogating Eichmann

*Avner W. Less*

I saw Adolf Eichmann for the first time at about 4:45 P.M. on May 29, 1960. Colonel Hofstaetter (my immediate superior) and I had sent for him to be brought to the room where the hearings were to take place. We waited in a state of acute tension; even the colonel, ordinarily a model of self-restraint, was unable to conceal his nervousness. My first reaction when the prisoner finally stood facing us in khaki shirt and trousers and open sandals was one of disappointment. I no longer know what I had expected —probably the sort of Nazi you see in the movies: tall, blond, with piercing blue eyes and brutal features expressive of domineering arrogance. Whereas this rather thin, balding man not much taller than myself looked utterly ordinary. The very normality of his appearance gave his dispassionate testimony an even more depressing impact than I had expected after examining the documents.

Eichmann began our dialogue with a request. He had worn glasses in Argentina; they had been taken away from him and he needed them now. I sent for them. Later on, plastic lenses were substituted for the glass ones, and since he wanted to prepare himself between sessions by jotting down notes, I obtained permission for him to wear his eyeglasses in his cell during the day.

Because he was a heavy smoker, I arranged for his cigarette ration to be increased, and whenever I lit up a cigarette for myself, I would offer him one. Not that I had any personal reason to extend such generosity; I did it because it made him more talkative and improved his powers of concentration.

When Eichmann sat facing me for the first time, he was a bundle of nerves. The left half of his face twitched. He hid his trembling hands under the table. I could feel his fear, and it would have been easy to make short work of him. He only knew his own methods of interrogation and those of his former colleagues in the Gestapo. It must have seemed less than likely to him that the Israeli police would treat him with extreme fairness.

As I watched Eichmann sitting there in this condition, I suddenly had the feeling I was holding a bird in my hand, a creature who felt completely at my mercy. But that impression soon passed. His statements and the documents we examined together revealed the cold sophistication and cunning with which he had planned and carried out the extermination of the Jews. Occasionally, this filled me with such loathing that I couldn't bear to be near him and would cast about for excuses to postpone the next hearing to another day, just to avoid having to follow his horrible descriptions or listen to his brazen lies.

Nevertheless, from the very beginning the hearings were conducted in a conversational manner. During the first days, in the heat of argument, we would occasionally speak at the same time or interrupt each other. When the secretaries who transcribed the tapes complained of the confusion, Eichmann and I agreed that he would stop talking in response to a prearranged signal from me.

His German was hideous. At first I had a very difficult time understanding him at all—the jargon of the Nazi bureaucracy pronounced in a mixture of Berlin and Austrian accents and further garbled by his liking for endlessly complicated sentences which he himself would occasionaly get lost in. After the first visit of his lawyer, Dr. Servatius, Eichmann asked me: "*Herr Hauptmann* [Captain], do you know what Dr. Servatius said? He objected to my German. He said: 'You'll have to relearn your language. Even the best translator won't be able to find his way through those convoluted sentences of yours.' Is my German actually that bad, *Herr Hauptmann*?" I had to agree that it was. Eichmann seemed almost offended.

I was especially struck by his complete lack of humor. On the few occasions when his razor-thin lips smiled, his eyes remained mirthless; each time,

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Avner W. Less, a captain with the Israeli police force, was a leading member of the investigative team appointed in 1960 to interrogate Adolf Eichmann, the SS Lieutenant Colonel who, as chief of the Jewish Office of the Gestapo, had been in charge of implementing the "Final Solution" during World War II. Captured in Argentina on May 2, 1960, Eichmann was brought to Israel for public trial (April 2-August 14, 1961); he was sentenced to death for crimes against the Jewish people and crimes against humanity, and executed on May 31, 1962. The present essay, translated from the German by Joel Agee, will appear as the introduction to the record of the police investigation, *Eichmann Interrogated,* edited by Jochen von Lang in collaboration with Claus Sibyll, to be published in June by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Translation copyright © 1983 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc.



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the look on his face was one of sardonic amusement and aggression.

His defense strategy was set from the start. I was already acquainted with it from my study of the Nuremberg trials. Knowing that his life was at stake, he clung from the beginning to the tactics of the major defendants at Nuremberg. He would lie until defeated by documentary proof, just as Kaltenbrunner, his former chief, had done. When that didn't help, he would present himself as a little cog in the machine and put all the blame on others, subordinates as well as superiors. And most frequently he would plead *Befehlsnotstand*, "orders from above."

He used all three methods by turns in the course of the interrogation and later at the trial in Jerusalem. Convinced that he could save his neck by demonstrating his own unimportance, he spoke at length and in detail about mass executions he had witnessed but in which his own role had been purely passive. In return for these volunteered accounts of crimes committed by others, he evidently expected me to give credence to whatever lies he produced to conceal his own crimes.

And yet, in the course of the hearings, I became something of a personal confidant for him. I was the one person to whom he could tell everything, lies as well as truths. Occasionally, he was so shaken by a damaging piece of evidence that he would unexpectedly confess everything. But then the extent of his admission would dawn on him, and at the next session he would ask for permission to add to his most recent testimony. Then he would deny everything he had previously admitted.

Once Eichmann actually paid me a compliment. We had been discussing the draft of a letter from the Reich Minister for Occupied Eastern Territories; it dealt with gassing equipment and contained the following sentence: "Permit me to state that this procedure meets with the approval of Sturmbannführer Eichmann, the specialist for Jewish questions at Reich Security Headquarters." This document was gravely damaging to Eichmann, but he spontaneously admitted that he had conferred with the writer of the letter along these lines. The next day, as we were checking the transcript, Eichmann said that he would like to say something more about the letter at our next meeting. I remarked that he was perfectly free to say whatever he wished. Eichmann replied that he was well aware that throughout the hearings I had not once attempted to obtain confessions by promises or threats. For this reason—and he said this quite formally—he felt the need to tell me that he was grateful for the fair hearing. These words were underscored with a ceremonious bow.

He was, as I said, extremely nervous at the beginning; but after about a week he recovered his composure. Evidently the tenor of the hearings had calmed him. There was one moment of panic, however—it must have been during the first half of June 1960—when he believed his last hour had struck. The officer of the guard stepped into the room and informed Eichmann that he had come to escort him to the judge. Badly frightened, Eichmann rose to his feet. One of the guards blindfolded him, and his knees buckled. "But *Herr Hauptmann*," he cried in a pleading voice, "I haven't told you everything yet!" I reassured him: "You're only being taken to the justice of the peace so he can renew the order for your detention. Then we will continue with our hearings." Whereupon Eichmann recovered his soldierly posture and marched out of the room, flanked by the two guards. The blindfold, incidentally, was intended to prevent him from getting an overall view of the prison compound.

I was particularly irritated by Eichmann's attempts to ingratiate himself with us. One day he pointed to the insignia of the Israeli police and said: "*Herr Hauptmann*, when I see this badge, I realize that you and I are colleagues. I was once a policeman myself." I replied: "You were never a policeman. You were in the SS and the SD." He gave me a baffled look. "Is that so?" After a brief pause he continued: "But I'm not afraid of the police. I know them. The court is something else again; the fact is, I've never been on trial."

I am recounting these particular scenes to give an idea of the sort of man who sat opposite me during the interrogations and during the sessions when we checked the transcripts for errors. What elicited my sense of outrage more than anything else was that Eichmann quite obviously had no feeling for the monstrousness of his crime, and that he did not show the slightest twinge of remorse. When on January 1, 1961, I mentioned the fact that a new year had begun Eichmann replied: "*Herr Hauptmann*, may I take the liberty of wishing you a happy New Year?" And he performed a sort of seated bow and clicked his heels under the table. All I could say was that it was impossible for me to wish him the same. His reply: "Yes, *Herr Hauptmann*, I understand very well that you are not allowed to do so." It never occurred to him that I simply wasn't able to do so.

This insensitivity became even more evident the day he asked me whether I had any brothers and sisters, and whether my parents were still alive. I told him that my father had been deported to the East by his organization in January 1943, in one of the last transports from Berlin. Eichmann opened his eyes wide and cried out: "But that's horrible, *Herr Hauptmann*! That's horrible!"

I DID NOT feel capable of telling him more about the fate of my family, but an account of my own fate might be a relevant addition here.

I was born in 1916 in Berlin, on Prager Street. My father's family came from East Prussia; my mother's had lived in Berlin for several genera-

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tions. My parents were good Jews and equally good Germans. My father worked hard and conscientiously in Germany, for as long as he was permitted to do so. In 1915, when World War I broke out, he volunteered. He survived the war; he was always very proud of his Iron Cross. My mother—almost fortunately, I might say—died of cancer at the age of forty-five, very soon after Hiter came to power.

I owe the happiest years of my youth to the Höhere Waldschule, a high school in the Grünewald district of Berlin. This was the first coeducational school in Germany. We spent the whole day at school, were served lunch there, did our homework after an hour's nap, and devoted a good part of our time to sports. The spirit of the Waldschule was so indelible that its former students still hold reunions each year in Berlin.

I was barely sixteen when Hitler seized power. Just a few days later, the SA and the Gestapo searched our apartment. Even on the day when my mother was taken to the hospital from which she never returned, heavily-armed storm troopers came and accused us of having smuggled out seditious material on my mother's stretcher. During the summer months of that year, my father became convinced that the storm troopers had it in for me in particular, and I was sent to France.

On September 5, 1933, I arrived in Paris, a refugee, without a work permit. Once, I was thrown out of a hotel because I couldn't pay my bill. The owner kept all my belongings, except for the clothes I was wearing. I was wearing sneakers—not the most adequate footwear for winter in Paris. But when you are young, you know how to bend under pressure and somehow you manage to get by. Thus, Paris became my new home. But at the same time it became clear to me that as a Jew I could not remain in the new Europe that was taking shape.

For this reason I joined Hechalutz, a Zionist youth movement which trained young people to become farmers in Israel, or rather Palestine, as it was then called. Early in 1935, the writer Alfred Döblin delivered a lecture in Paris. Some of my friends told me about it and mentioned that a very beautiful girl from Germany had been there. I resolved to have a look at this marvel. I went, had a look, and fell in love. I informed my friends tersely: "I'm going to marry her."

The girl came from Hamburg, and when she told her family there of our marriage plans, it seemed as though the world had come to an end. I was less than a have-not, I wasn't even twenty yet, and I had no trade. The family shipped Vera off to Stockholm to put some distance between her and me. She held out for three months and then came back to Paris. Her family in Hamburg admitted defeat and set only one condition: I would have to learn a trade. I signed up for a course in ladies' hairdressing and graduated with an impressive diploma; now at least I could give Vera beautiful hairdos. On November 7, 1936, we were married in the town hall of the 5th *arrondissement* of Paris.

Hechalutz first sent us for farm training to one of its kibbutzim in southern France. At the end of August 1938 we obtained a certificate for Palestine and on September 5 we disembarked in Tel Aviv. We found work in the orange groves of Hadera. Vera was used only for picking and pruning, which was seasonal, but I was given a steady job. It was backbreaking work and the boss wasn't always able to pay us on time, but at least we had some security.

In October 1939, in her sixth month of pregnancy, Vera came down with spinal polio. At first she was paralyzed from head to foot and suffered from severe neuralgia, so that the merest touch was torture. No hospital would take her. There were no trained personnel, nor could the necessary equipment be found—an iron lung, for example, or a water bed. In Hadera we had a room with a small kitchen; the "toilet" was about thirty yards away, in the garden. We had no electricity, only petroleum lamps and a petroleum cooker. I had to give up my job to take care of Vera. The doctors tried very hard to help her, but they knew relatively little about polio. They speculated whether it might not be best to terminate her pregnancy. Luckily, they decided against it in the end. Our daughter, born in February 1940 with great difficulty, is now the mother of two delightful girls.

My sister, who lived in Tel Aviv, quit her job and took over the care of the baby. I learned to massage Vera; for twenty-two months I was exclusively occupied with her care. The unemployment benefits and welfare money we received were enough to keep us alive, not enough to live on. Some minor benefit accrued to us from the misfortune that had befallen Vera's mother. She had succeeded in leaving Germany shortly before World War II broke out, but on the way to us she got stuck in Belgrade, and the Nazis caught up with her. She was murdered there, along with many others, on March 30, 1942. Her household effects did eventually reach us, though, after a long and confused voyage; she happened to have sent them off in time. I sold every single object for a pittance.

Vera had an iron will; she wanted to conquer her illness. She learned to move about at home and was able to do some of the work. Even during the greatest heat, she had to wear a high orthopedic corset all day long. Out of doors she could only move about with a cane and my arm for support. The first time I took Vera out in the street in a wheelchair, she burst into tears; it was only then that she realized she would never again be

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able to walk about like a healthy person. Nine years later we had another child, a son. During the delivery, Vera's life hung in the balance; but then she was very proud of being able to diaper our baby herself.

When Vera was well enough to be left on her own during the day, I went to look for a job. The British Mandatory government was recruiting auxiliary policemen. I signed up, was given four weeks of military training, and was sent to Haifa to work as a guard at the airport there. I did night duty because that enabled me to take care of Vera and the household during the day. I kept that job for four-and-a-half years.

Then I was given a chance to transfer to the price-control section of the Mandatory government's Ministry of the Economy. I accepted at once. The pay was much better, and for the first time we were able to live without worrying about money. In 1946, with the help of a bank loan, we were even able to buy an apartment of our own. It was very small, but now we were no longer living to pay the rent, so those tiny rooms seemed almost a paradise on earth. When the state of Israel was proclaimed, I was immediately recruited into the economic-control apparatus, and when the police were entrusted with the campaign against economic crimes, I was given an officer's rank.

In 1954 I was sent to the United States for three-and-a-half years, in the line of duty, and Vera and the children went with me. I arranged for Vera to be examined by specialists there. They said: "Mrs. Less, you are a medical miracle. You should not be able to make the movements you do. Somehow your body has learned to adjust to the loss of certain functions. All we can do for you is advise you not to overexert yourself." As it turned out, they were right: starting in 1968, Vera's general condition began to deteriorate; from 1974 on, she needed the wheelchair more and more often; and in 1980 she died of a brain hemorrhage.

TWENTY years before, on May 23, 1960, when she was still in relatively good health, the evening papers carried a sensational report under banner headlines: Adolf Eichmann had been arrested and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion had announced in the Knesset that Eichmann would stand trial in Israel for his crimes against the Jewish people. No Israeli citizen, no Jew anywhere in the world could remain indifferent to this event. Was there a home anywhere in Israel that had no victims to mourn?

The news filled me with satisfaction, but also with dread at the thought of reopening wounds that had scarcely begun to heal. How much agony and grief would be stirred up by these memories? Thoughts and feelings that had been hard to suppress and forget would be reawakened. But then, did we have the right to forget? Wouldn't we be endangering our children's future if we turned our backs on the past? I discussed these questions until late into the night with Vera and several friends. The following day my friend and colleague Yehuda Kaufmann told me he would like to become involved in the Eichmann case. The thought of such a task horrified me; and besides, it wouldn't bring a single one of the murdered millions back to life.

But the next day, May 25, Colonel Shmuel Roth called me and said General Selinger wished to see me. Selinger at that time was chief of police for Haifa and the whole northern district. With him in his office was Colonel Efraim Hofstaetter-Elrom, head of the criminal-investigation department of the Tel Aviv district. I had always regarded General Selinger as the prototype of the Israeli police officer, and Colonel Hofstaetter was considered one of the most capable criminal investigators.

Selinger said: "Less, the government has entrusted the police with the Eichmann investigation. I am putting together a group of officers to prepare the case against Eichmann. I have chosen you to be his interrogator. It won't be an easy task, and in all probability it will take a good deal longer than three months. Are you willing?"

My first impulse was to decline. I dreaded the thought of tracking down the evidence of so much horror. When Selinger noticed my hesitation, he said: "Less, I am convinced you are the right man for the interrogation." When Colonel Hofstaetter joined in urging me to accept, I overcame my revulsion; after all, somebody had to do it.

Selinger and Hofstaetter agreed that the incriminating evidence should be organized along geographical lines, and that for every country where Eichmann and his machine had been active, an officer conversant with that country's language should be appointed. It was then decided that since Eichmann was being transferred to a prison near Haifa, our staff headquarters would have to be in that city as well. In conclusion, General Selinger impressed on us the need for total secrecy; we were not to discuss any details, not even at home.

As I was leaving police headquarters that evening, a journalist accosted me on the street: "Captain, I hear you're a member of the group entrusted with the Eichmann hearings. I'd like to ask you a few questions." I was flabbergasted, for I was convinced that only a handful of people were informed. So I merely said: "The only thing I'd be willing to discuss with you is the weather." At that moment a major came out of the building, a man who happened to be the official spokesman for the police force. The reporter complained to him that I had been unwilling to tell him anything about myself. The major said: "Less, you're quite free to tell him about yourself." This I did, although very sparingly. When I got home, our

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daughter exclaimed with great excitement that she had heard on the radio that I was part of the police team that would be investigating Eichmann. So it took just a few hours for the cat to get out of the bag. Sometime later, Eichmann's place of detention became the best-kept "secret" in Israel; everyone knew where he was, but no one talked about it.

THE following is a brief summary of the guidelines I was given for my work.

*Object:* To obtain a complete statement from the defendant concerning his goals and activities during the Nazi regime.

*Preparations:* All the materials assembled under the deputy director of Bureau 06 (that was our team's official name) were placed at my disposal. The research staff had instructions to direct my attention to every document, every piece of testimony or bit of information that could be of use in the hearings or that could be authenticated or verified by the defendant. For my part, I had to prepare in writing all questions I planned to ask the defendant.

*The Hearings:* They would be recorded on tape. I was to mark each tape with an identifying label immediately after the end of each hearing. If I considered it desirable that Eichmann amplify his voluntary testimony with written notes, and if Eichmann agreed to this, I could supply him with paper and writing implements. Whenever I handed him a document, I was to solicit his commentary. He was free to refuse such comment.

*The Tapes:* After each hearing, I was to hand over the tapes of our conversation to the director of the 06 archives. He would have them transcribed and stored in a safe, but first Eichmann and I had to make a word-for-word comparison of each transcript and tape. If any changes were made, Eichmann was to make them by hand; furthermore, he had to confirm in writing that he had approved the correction and that the text of the final transcript was identical to that of the tape recording. The transcript would then be read aloud to the research staff for the purpose of analysis and discussion. The entire body of evidence (the transcripts of the hearings, the documents, the testimony of witnesses) would have to be translated into Hebrew.

NO ONE on our team had detailed knowledge of the Holocaust. We immediately got started and attacked the many books General Selinger supplied us with, plowed through the forty-two volumes of the Nuremberg trials of the major war criminals, as well as the many thousands of pages of the subsidiary Nuremberg trials. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial center in Jerusalem, opened its archives to us, and its research staff helped us in every way possible. Gerald Reitlinger's *The Final Solution* became almost a bible for us; Léon Poliakov's works and H.G. Adler's *Theresienstadt* proved equally indispensable. We sat reading day and night, reading, reading. . . . None of us slept more than three or four hours at a time. We were exhausted, nervous, sometimes irritable. It was a most stressful and trying time.

We obtained our first important documents from Tuvia Friedman, a journalist who on his own initiative had set up a documentation center in Haifa. (He had been a victim of the Nazis himself, in Poland.) An especially important adviser was Robert Kempner, the American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. He became our "gray eminence" and gave active assistance to the prosecution authorities later on at the trial. Mountains of documents poured in from all the countries that had received appeals for help from Bureau 06—all except the Soviet Union.

As a result of this strenuous and sometimes hectic work under the leadership of Selinger and Hofstaetter, we became a homogeneous unit with an *esprit de corps* that has kept us together until this day. If Eichmann amazed us at first with his knowledge of the material, the day soon came when we knew a lot more about his actions than he could have liked. The evidence grew, and with it the files of the prosecution. I myself contributed a good part of this material, having questioned Eichmann for 275 hours, which came to 3,564 pages of transcript. But this would have been impossible without my colleagues' painstaking research.

Criminal investigations in Israel are conducted along English rather than continental European lines. The police, who are not under the authority of the Attorney General, conduct the investigation from beginning to end, independently and in the framework of their own guidelines. The police officer conducting an investigation does not have the function or powers of an examining magistrate. After the police investigation has been completed, the whole dossier goes to the Attorney General's office, which examines it for errors and inconsistencies, and then presents the court with a written indictment.

Contrary to continental procedures, the official in charge of the interrogation is not permitted to subject the accused to cross-examination. Before the hearings begin, he must inform the accused of his rights and make it clear to him that he is free to speak or not, as he chooses, but that everything he says will be taken down and can be used if he is brought to trial. The interrogator is not even permitted to say that any statement made by the accused "may be used against him," since the word "against" implies a threat that could intimidate the accused. Under such conditions, the questioning of a suspect is somewhat difficult. The interrogator can base his questions only on statements the accused himself has made. If, as was the case with Eichmann, the accused asks the interrogator to refresh his memory with questions, he is free to do so.

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Throughout the police investigation of Eichmann, we worked in close association with Attorney General Gideon Hausner and Gavriel Bach, currently a judge on the Supreme Court in Jerusalem. They had to familiarize themselves with the complex material very quickly; the government insisted on holding the trial in the near future, and so the indictment had to be drawn up in a hurry. The volume and content of the documents would have required another year's work for a complete police investigation. We of Bureau 06 were quite unhappy about having to break off our research prematurely. On the other hand, the state had already incurred considerable expense on account of Eichmann. He was the only inmate of a large prison complex, all the other inmates having been transferred for security reasons. In addition to the members of Bureau 06—there must have been well over thirty police officers in the group—a detachment of border police was put in charge of security. This detachment also supplied the guard personnel. None of the guards spoke either of Eichmann's two languages, German and Spanish. Their officers, however, had to speak at least one of those languages. To prevent any acts of private revenge, no one who had lost family members in the Holocaust was chosen for the guard unit. For fear of attempts to free Eichmann, the entire area was kept under strict surveillance day and night.

EICHMANN's cell, measuring roughly ten by thirteen feet, contained only a cot, a table, and a chair. The electric light was left on all night. Every day he cleaned his cell and the adjoining toilet and shower room unaided. He did these chores with thoroughness and dedication. A guard sat in the room with him day and night, and outside the cell door sat a second guard, who watched the one in the cell through a peephole, to make sure there was no contact between him and Eichmann. The second guard was in a kind of vestibule, outside the door of which a third guard kept constant watch on him.

These security measures were not designed to prevent Eichmann from attacking the guard in his cell so much as to prevent him from committing suicide. That was our greatest fear; if he had succeeded in committing suicide, no one anywhere in the world would have believed us. That is why we guarded him like the apple of our eye. During the first week, when the electric light disturbed his sleep, he would pull his woolen blanket over his head, whereupon the guard would pull it back to make sure Eichmann was not trying to kill himself under the blanket. Twice a day he was examined from head to toe by our police physician.

The room where the hearings took place was considerably larger than Eichmann's cell, but also very simply furnished. A large military-style desk was placed close to the center of the room, with a chair on either side. I sat facing the door, and Eichmann sat across from me. To my right, on a stand beside the wall, was a large recorder, which I operated. On the desk, two microphones, one in front of me, the other in front of Eichmann. On a small table beside me, a telephone.

I was never alone with Eichmann. Each hearing proceeded according to a fixed ritual. I would leave the headquarters building and go to the gate leading into the main prison block. The sentry, who had been notified of my approach, would examine my papers and let me pass. I would cross the large inner court, surrounded by an outer wall and a one-story cell complex, and arrive in the interrogation room. There I would arrange my papers and documents, put a tape on the tape recorder, and phone the officer of the guard to bring the prisoner in.

The officer responsible for Eichmann's transfer from his cell to the interrogation room would come in first, followed by two guards with Eichmann between them. Eichmann would stand at attention behind his chair until I said he could be seated. Though I told him there was no need to stand at attention, he went on doing so until the end. Maybe it was a habit he couldn't shake off, or maybe he wished to demonstrate that fifteen years after the war he still wanted to be treated like a soldier.

By this time, the guard officer would have told the two guards to sit down, one by the window, the other in the open doorway. The guard in front of the window was supposed to keep his eyes fixed on us at the table; the guard in the doorway had to watch his comrade. Neither of them understood a word of what Eichmann and I were saying. Our conversation would not begin until after the officer of the guard had left us, and he would return only when the guards were relieved (every two hours) or whenever I notified him by phone that the hearing or the session of correcting transcripts was at an end.

AS TIME went on, I noticed that each time Eichmann said "Never! Never! Never, *Herr Hauptmann*!" or "At no time! At no time!" he was lying. That was always a cue for me to ask my colleagues to search for additional material with which to probe the sensitive spot. They often located just what was needed, and thanks to their stubborn determination I would be able to present Eichmann with additional damaging documents at a later hearing. When I read to him from the book *Commandant of Auschwitz* by the notorious concentration-camp commander Rudolf Hoess, Eichmann became increasingly nervous. He denied every accusation with the argument that he hadn't had the slightest influence on the way the camps were run; intermittently, he would try to belittle Hoess's statements with sarcastic laughter, but his quivering hands betrayed his fear.

On October 9, 1960, Colonel Offer, commander

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of the prison, came into the room and informed Eichmann that his defense lawyer, Dr. Servatius of Cologne, was expected that day. Two days later, as we were going over some tapes, Eichmann told me in a buoyant, almost peppy manner about his first meeting with his attorney. Servatius looked exactly the way he had imagined him. He made a very competent impression. No doubt he had gathered some important and highly relevant insights at the Nuremberg trials. He, Eichmann, would need that kind of experience; he understood the gravity of his situation very well, he said; he was not harboring any illusions. One thing was definite, though: his trial would be a historic event of the first order; he as a person was less important than the "historical factors" involved. After all, he had just been "a little cog" in Hitler's gigantic machine.

I replied that this might very well turn out to be the central issue of the trial—whether he wasn't in fact the flywheel of that merciless extermination machine. In any case, this was an issue which neither he nor I had to decide; it was the court's task to arrive at a judgment.

About four weeks later, I presented Eichmann with a document dated September 21, 1939, a time when there was still fighting in Poland. It dealt with a meeting in which he had participated and where, among other items on the agenda, the "ghettoization" of all Polish Jews as a step toward the Final Solution was decided. It was precisely this that Eichmann had categorically denied just a short while before. It was a noticeable shock for him to have to admit that he had been aware of a plan to exterminate the Jews as early as September 1939. This document completely robbed Eichmann of his appetite; he sent his meal back without touching it. Ordinarily, he ate heartily.

In February 1961, as we were correcting one of the last transcripts, the officer on duty led our photographer, Gerber, into the interrogation room. As Gerber set up his equipment, Eichmann looked at me with large, questioning eyes. I said: "I believe we're going to have our picture taken." Eichmann buttoned the collar of his shirt, said "Ah, good," sat up straight as a stick, and put on a serious and thoughtful expression. He was vain enough to want to be remembered as an important historical personage. (I never saw this photograph, incidentally. It seems to have been lost.)

Two months after the last hearing, Eichmann stood trial before his judges in Jerusalem. The state of Israel paid his defense costs. His trial was of exemplary fairness. Not one of his victims received comparable treatment.

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# The Secret Life of Sarah Lawrence

*Louise Blecher Rose*

NOBODY at Sarah Lawrence thought it was peculiar for the president and his fiftieth-anniversary committee to choose a fiction writer to produce a history of the college. Just the opposite: the plan seemed like a typical stroke of Sarah Lawrence genius. Everyone agreed that a book was needed to sharpen the image of the college, which had undergone a certain blurring since the 60's. Students were not applying, so the theory went, because nobody had a clear picture anymore of what Sarah Lawrence was. Other colleges had appropriated its terminology and ideas: individual education with small classes, no required courses, papers instead of exams, conferences with teachers, academic credit for theater, dance, painting, sculpture, writing, and ceramics, plus the "donning" system which Sarah Lawrence had invented for advising students. But Sarah Lawrence was still *different*; it was the authentic, the original, the only college that did what it promised: allowed the student to be in charge of her (and now his, too) "learning experience." Sarah Lawrence was, so its third president Harold Taylor told me with what I came to recognize as typical Sarah Lawrence modesty, "the cutting edge of American education."

All the school needed was publicity, two hundred readable pages. "Write whatever interests *you*," then President Charles DeCarlo told me in 1979. A typical Sarah Lawrence assignment. Yet what the college really wanted was a miracle. Sarah Lawrence still has its major asset, a spectacular campus in Bronxville, N.Y., but otherwise in every sense it is failing. It has few scholarships, minimal science equipment, a tiny library, terrible athletic facilities, almost no endowment, a female/male ratio of four to one, dwindling applications. Though the college still passes as being academically sound and chock full of intellectual, creative, and beautiful (if also neurotic) students, these days most of the admissions committee's hours are taken up with deciding which hopeless cases are to be admitted and which rejected. The acceptance rate is 90 percent. Tuition alone will be $9,280 next year; with rooom and board, a year at Sarah Lawrence costs $13,130, making it one of the most expensive colleges in the country and one practicing a new kind of radicalism: open admissions for the rich.

I was considered especially well qualified for working the book miracle because I had both graduated from Sarah Lawrence (in 1965) and been invited back there ten years later to teach a course in fiction writing. Having seen the place from both sides, I could, presumably, do it full justice. It is characteristic of Sarah Lawrence that no one ever doubted in the course of our talks that I shared in the otherwise unanimous rosy vision. Sarah Lawrence faculty expect to be misunderstood by Middle America, but not by anyone who has herself been touched by the miracle which the college believes itself to be.

To grasp the full force of this belief one must realize that Sarah Lawrence considers itself to be only accidentally located in America and only accidentally on earth; its real location is another, much better, planet. On that planet, bourgeois values are shunned; a student who wants to go to law school in order to get out and make a good living later on is looked upon as an educational failure even if he gets into Harvard. There used to be a saying on campus that the college takes the daughters of Republicans and turns them into Democrats, but this is only the beginning. Students are expected upon leaving to want neither money nor worldly success but only a chance to clean up the United States. (How this will be managed by people who cannot keep their own rooms or themselves clean is not specified.) Sarah Lawrence holds itself as aloof from the rest of the country as though it were an independent principality, a kind of intellectual Monaco, where the game is not gambling but deploring: course time, lunch time, after-school time are spent deploring the doings of Everywhere Else, USA. The college looks upon itself as a moral beacon in the dark American night, willing in moments of special crisis to share its light with other countries. After the Entebbe rescue mission, for example, a twenty-year veteran of the English department said to me, "Of course the question is whether or not the use of force is *ever* moral." The attitude expressed here is typical of a place which also believes the

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Pentagon should be dismantled immediately, and its entire budget transferred to small educational institutions.

As a student at Sarah Lawrence in the early 60's, I had been just as captivated by the atmosphere as everyone else. I loved the heady excitement of the place, the way Sarah Lawrence seemed to be in color, while the rest of the world was in black and white. Part of the drama entailed keeping certain things a secret. We were all in on the conspiracy to sell Sarah Lawrence. What tour guides we students were! I can still hear myself telling anyone who would listen how happy I was at the school, how interesting my teachers were, and how exciting my courses. And it was true, too. Why shouldn't we have been having a wonderful time? Who wouldn't? Sarah Lawrence was an extended vacation. I took three courses a year with no math, science, foreign language, or any English literature prior to the 19th century (including no Shakespeare). There were no exams, of course; why memorize when in Real Life you can always go to a library and *look things up*? Instead of that kind of academic drudgery, I listened to music, sunbathed, talked to classmates and teachers, wandered around Bronxville staring at mansions; never did I stay up late cramming or otherwise overexert myself. Though I did far less work than my sister who went to New York University, it was I who got all the praise. When I told people I went to Sarah Lawrence they were always so impressed that I sometimes wondered what I could do for an encore. What status in the future could equal the one I had already achieved as a nineteen-year-old Sarah Lawrence student?

The only trouble with all this was a slight sense of fraud. It was wonderful to be part of the aura surrounding Sarah Lawrence, but I always wondered what would happen if people actually knew what went on there. Always, there was the feeling that the real Sarah Lawrence had to be kept a secret from the outside world, which was too middle-class, too limited, too conventional, too puritanical to grasp what we were undertaking. But what exactly *were* we undertaking? Had I tried to come up with an answer, I would not have been able to.

It wasn't just the disparity between inside and outside that puzzled me. I also wondered what the college's secret method was for bringing together the divergent groups on campus: the debutantes from Bronxville and elsewhere who ironed their hair and spoke beautiful French or Italian but otherwise gave no indication of life above the eyebrows; the bright, radical Jewish students; the sad-eyed refugee teachers; the mainly Marxist faculty so overinvolved with students they seemed to have no other life. How did they all fit under one roof? My own parents, dyed-in-the-wool liberals, could not be shocked by any of the opinions I brought home from school, but what about the parents of the debutantes?

Constance Warren, the second president of Sarah Lawrence, had addressed this very point in her 1940 book, *A New Design for Women's Education*. Warning parents that their daughters would come home from college changed, she reminded them tartly that this was precisely what college was intended to do. It would be a tragedy if their daughters stayed the same.

What I never quite succeeded in figuring out was what all this change was supposed to lead to. I knew enough not to raise my hand when our political-science teacher asked the class how many of us believed we should be allowed to inherit money; nevertheless, the sight of that teacher ordering those debutantes to give up their inheritances seemed wildly implausible. But then again everything at Sarah Lawrence was implausible: the girl down the hall who painted pictures of dead fetuses on her wall when she was depressed; her roommate, so casual about such matters that she even slept with her hairdresser once in return for a good blunt cut; my best friend, deeply involved in Sufi mysticism, who still spent every weekend at her parents' posh country club; another friend with a "Reading Inhibition" (her psychiatrist's diagnosis), who made it through brilliantly by taking mainly dance and creative writing.

Most implausible of all were the affairs between students and professors. Sarah Lawrence girls were so beautiful that when fashion magazines needed models they simply came up to Bronxville and plucked them off the campus. But to see these dazzling creatures teamed up with the homely middle-aged professors on our faculty was peculiarly unsettling: perhaps another example of Sarah Lawrence's talent for unlikely combinations.

When I began teaching at the college in 1975 I was prepared for all the old anomalies. Indeed, the students still looked so familiar that I sometimes thought I recognized my old classmates, trapped in time and their Capezios. But I found that many new elements had been added in the ten years since I had been away. Everyone was now wearing jungle warfare spots, army fatigues, and wraparound sunglasses. So prevalent was this costume you might have thought Carlos the Jackal was running a training school for terrorists on this anti-militaristic campus in Bronxville. Between the guerrillas and the students dressed like cast members of *The Threepenny Opera*, it was harder than ever to keep one's bearings. (Clothing at Sarah Lawrence has always been a form of symbolic utterance. A few years before, the students had been outraged when President DeCarlo hired lawyers to defend a group of them arrested during a Pentagon sit-in; they especially hated the three-piece suits which

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made the lawyers look as out of place on the campus as if they had been dressed in armor.)

Along with dress, other attitudes too had been updated. Preparing for my first class, I had wondered what the students would be writing about, now that abortions were legal. I found out the answer at our very first session, when a male student got up to read a story about his first love affair with another man, complete with nude sunbathing scenes, sunburned penises, and unhappy childhood memories of having been dressed by his mother like a girl. It was soon obvious to me that this was the new subject on the agenda; and observing campus life over the next few months, I realized that Sarah Lawrence was once again in the advance guard. Other colleges too were in a state of sexual turmoil during this period, but Sarah Lawrence was surely the only one with its own gay film festival (one feature film: *Dyketectics*).

By the time I started writing my book about Sarah Lawrence, I was no longer a true believer. I remembered the gaps in my own education too clearly to share in the general admiration for the school's doctrine of student autonomy, and I had observed too many mixed-up students by then to take quite so sanguine a view of the undergraduate population as my colleagues did. Nevertheless, I had by no means lost my affection or respect for Sarah Lawrence. I still thought of it as special and admired it for having the courage to go against the prevailing temper, regardless of consequences.

In one respect, at least, I was still at one with my colleagues. I never expected, in looking into Sarah Lawrence's past, to find anything dishonorable, or at least anything more incriminating than, say, some quaintly outdated examples of early progressive thought. The last thing I expected to find was a file of documents that would make Sarah Lawrence sound like a branch of the DAR in its most benighted period.

This file, neatly labeled "Admissions Quotas Jewish Students," comprised a detailed record of the college's discriminatory quota system, as instituted in 1928-29 and adhered to (with modifications) at least until 1956, when the file ended. Illustrating each upward revision of the quota were neat lists of the Jewish students in every class, added up and converted into percentages so the admissions committee would know at a glance how many could be accepted for the following year. A typical 1939 file entry is titled, "Disposition of 46 Completed Applications from Jewish Candidates/Disposition of 256 Completed Applications from Gentile Candidates." (In 1939, of the 46 Jews applying, 9 were accepted; of the 256 Gentiles, 101 were admitted.) So precise were the lists that half-Jews were actually designated as such alongside their names, though counted, interestingly enough, as full Jews in the final tally. Sarah Lawrence, notwithstanding its vaunted artistic temper, was clearly a model of rigor when it came to keeping track of its Jews.

Along with the lists themselves were letters, minutes of board meetings, and a variety of other documents recording the deliberations of the Sarah Lawrence community on what the documents frequently referred to as the "Jewish Question." What was remarkable about these documents was their spirit of unanimity. There were letters from three Jews protesting the quota system, but otherwise not one of the worthies whose views were recorded in the file appears to have been troubled by doubts that the quota might be immoral or unethical or that it might fall into the category of one of those "prejudices" that Sarah Lawrence was always proclaiming itself so eager to combat. It was simply taken for granted by all concerned that Jews, because of what they were like, did not belong in the Sarah Lawrence community.

Here is how Henry Noble McCracken, the President of Vassar, described the Jewish character to his fellow President Constance Warren of Sarah Lawrence, in a 1933 letter whose tone is typical of much of the other correspondence in the file:

> Experience showed a very large proportion of [Jews] so unstable nervously as to be a problem. Whenever [a] physician's report showed any sign of that they were turned away. Also a very large proportion of disciplinary cases, especially stealing. New York University had given personality tests which threw out a great many.

In setting up the machinery to keep Jews out of Sarah Lawrence, the college's trustees were fulfilling—so far as possible—the original vision of its founder, William Van Duzer Lawrence. Lawrence, a real-estate investor who bought up the land around Bronxville and developed it as a restricted community, had definitely intended the same restrictions to apply to the college. His unequivocal wishes in the matter were expressed in a letter which Lawrence's son Dudley read to a meeting of fellow trustees in May 1933:

> It is my belief that a small college, where girls and faculty are thrown more intimately together, is more effective than a larger one. For this reason, it is my wish that the Sarah Lawrence College be restricted to 250 resident students and 100 day students. Moreover these are to be selected from homes which are genuinely American, and are to be chosen with reference to their general promise, special aptitudes, and values of personality as well as with reference to their scholastic attainments. It is my wish that the group may be as homogeneous as possible, that parents may have the satisfaction of knowing with whom their daughters are associated during the most impressionable years of their lives. . . .

One of the questions in Sarah Lawrence's original application form had been, "Has your daughter been brought up to strict Sunday observance?"

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Though the college eventually dropped the question from its form, the file offers copious documentation of the fact that in its heart of hearts, and whatever its political and ideological cast, it always sought to maintain itself as an institution for Christians. When Jews began to be admitted in greater and greater numbers—from a low of 2 percent in the early 30's to 10 percent in the 40's and finally to 50 percent in the 50's—it was simply because there were not enough Gentile candidates qualified for admission. Far from indicating any change of heart toward Jews, every upward revision of the quota was greeted with alarm at the dread prospect that Sarah Lawrence might, in the words of Trustee Julia Titsworth, be "becoming a Jewish institution."

This, in any case, was the way Julia Titsworth had heard it described, and she hastened to report the matter to the trustees at a meeting in May 1933. The trustees responded with renewed determination to set limits on "what proportion of Jews it was safe to have in the college" and "protested vigorously against allowing the question to take its natural course."

IF THE trustees made no secret of their real feelings about Jews among themselves, their rationalization of the quota to the outside world was quite different. Here the stress was on its beneficial aspects, not just for Gentiles but for Jews also. The happiest environment for both these groups, it turned out, would be maintained by keeping Jewish representation to a minimum, among other reasons because Jews themselves supposedly did not want to be surrounded by Jews any more than Gentiles did. In the 30's President Constance Warren repeatedly stressed this point in her letters on the subject, and twenty years later President Harold Taylor was making the same point:

> In many cases an institution which becomes identified as a Jewish college is not attractive to the best-qualified Jewish, as well as non-Jewish, students. . . . A number of the Quaker schools, whose social philosophy is in consonance with ours, have met the same problem and have adopted a limitation. . . .

So prevalent, moreover, was the alleged dislike of Jews for being surrounded by their co-religionists that given the first chance to do so, they set up anti-Jewish restrictions themselves. In a 1936 letter to John Haynes Holmes, rector of the Community Church of New York,and in another letter three years later to the sociologist Robert S. Lynd, Miss Warren came up with numerous examples of this reputed practice:

> I have talked to a number of headmasters who had had experience in running progressive schools which were financed and controlled largely by Jews, and in every instance they have told me that the Jews demanded a limited Jewish enrollment and a limit to the number of Jews on the faculty.

So it appears that the quota system, which started out as a way to eliminate obnoxious Jews, developed by this rationale into a system for insuring their protection and then ultimately into a Jewish practice.

DESPITE the ease with which the quota was thus justified, no one at Sarah Lawrence wanted it publicly known—so they simply lied. Replying to a query from a Mt. Vernon high-school guidance counselor, President Warren wrote on January 23, 1932: "We have had no quota, as yet, with regard to Jewish girls." Similarly, twenty-four years later, when Carla Pekelis Seitz, a Jewish refugee from Italy who was on the Sarah Lawrence faculty, asked for an open discussion of the quota system, the request was refused. Alice Bovard, admissions director for the college, explained her reasons in a note to the trustees:

> I see no good to be gained by a full discussion of this problem by the whole faculty, and I see a great deal of danger. The emotion engendered will be communicated to the students, and groups will be set off—in just the way that we want at every cost to avoid.

This incident took place in 1956, when the quota was set at 50 percent. The college had grown to 550 undergraduates by this time, but the majority of qualified applicants were Jews. In earlier days, even though the Jewish quota was far lower, President Warren could argue that no outstanding Jewish candidates were ever turned down in favor of less qualified Gentiles; by the 1950's, however, no one was even bothering to assert this. By then it had become clear to everyone that what the quota system actually entailed was the rejection of good Jewish candidates and the acceptance of less qualified Gentile ones in their place. A 1956 memo from Charlotte Houtermans, a faculty member of the admissions committee, states:

> It became apparent that the list of good, acceptable candidates came primarily from Jewish families.... The number of non-Jewish students with good academic promise on the contrary seems rather limited and for the sake of the religious balance we will have to include in our final selection between 20 and 30 students . . . who will probably have considerably lower ratings than some students [whom] we rejected in the beginning.

Esther Raushenbush, who served as dean of the college (and later, from 1964 to 1969, as its one Jewish president), complained in a letter to the admissions committee of the contempt in which Sarah Lawrence was held because of this practice, and urged recruitment from within the public schools. Other members of the committee urged

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new public-relations efforts directed toward non-Jews. William Rubin, currently director of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art and at the time a member of the Sarah Lawrence art-history department, wrote an especially eloquent plea for a policy of "discriminating *in favor*" of non-Jews, even "at the cost of purely academic values," in order to save Sarah Lawrence from the fate of "factories like Hunter and Columbia" and as "the only way of holding in check a situation [i.e., a Jewish majority] which . . . can irreversibly ruin the situation of the school." Only Mrs. Seitz, who had become a member of the admissions committee in 1954, proposed ending discrimination completely:

> *I think that discrimination is bad, no matter* how well-meaning its motivation. I think that in an institution like ours, looked upon suspiciously by some on account of its allegedly shocking liberal views, it is absurd. I think that the student body thus acquired is only apparently well-balanced, for its Jewish and non-Jewish groups are not chosen with the same criteria.

I spoke with Mrs. Seitz, who said she was never actually informed of the quota system, but watched it operating. In the end, she told me, she resigned from the committee because she could not, as a refugee herself, be the one to reject a Jewish candidate for admission on the grounds that she was Jewish.

Alas, it was not difficult at Sarah Lawrence to find people willing to do that job. Many faculty members with whom I subsequently communicated, both Jews and non-Jews, had understood what was going on all along. Indeed, some of them were still arguing in favor of the quota. I had the distinct feeling that many of them wished for the good old days when they actually had enough qualified applicants to be able to drop some of the Jewish ones. One Jewish member of the admissions committee told me that at the end of the selection process every member of the committee was allowed to put his favorite candidate into the pool of admissions. This man, a long-time member of the English department, reported to me rather gleefully: "Each year I saved my favorite Jew to put in."

There were three, however, who did complain. Apart from Mrs. Seitz's letter of resignation, the file also contains letters of protest from the late 30's from the anthropologist Franz Boas, and a correspondence in the late 50's between Maurice Hexter, the college's financial adviser, and President Harold Taylor on the subject of "geographical diversity in admissions," which was Sarah Lawrence's public euphemism for its quota system.

Hexter's letters were hesitant, even apologetic in tone. Taylor's replies, by contrast, were classic Sarah Lawrence productions, full of high-minded outrage at the suggestion that Sarah Lawrence could possibly be discriminating against Jews "either by geographical quota or any other means." Such a suggestion, Taylor said at one point, was actually "insulting to those of us who are trying for the sake of the quality of education to select a diverse and talented student body from everywhere in the country." What was so remarkable about this display, with its almost reflexive implication that Jews fall so far outside the normal human categories ("diverse," "talented") as to be considered a breed apart, was that Taylor must have known he was in any case not telling the truth. A memo from his own admissions director Alice Bovard plainly stated that "the college was disquieted by the preponderance of Jewish applicants not only from around the college but *from all over the United States.*" Jews, it seems, remained Jews no matter where they came from.

WHAT happened when I discovered the file and wanted to write about it is as instructive as the file itself. Sarah Lawrence believes deeply in uncovering other people's secrets. If a poll were taken of the faculty and administration, it would reveal near-total agreement that every institution in the country from the Presidency on down should throw open its back files and if possible broadcast them on public television for the general edification of us all. Its own secrets, however, were a different matter. When I argued first that the Jewish file was an important piece of social history and second that Sarah Lawrence could redeem its own past by exposing it—how many colleges after all would have the courage to do such a thing?—the response was no different from what it would have been in the stuffiest, most hidebound of institutions. After reading my manuscript, President DeCarlo told me that for the good of the college and for my own good, this material had better be left alone. Of course I could proceed on my own, but I was a very good teacher, albeit without tenure, and he would hate for the college to lose me.

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# French Culture in Decline

*Alain Besançon*

SINCE I happen to be on the west coast of the United States these days, instead of in Paris where I normally live, I receive *Le Monde* belatedly. Also, I had not paid too much attention to an article by Raymond Sokolov that appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* concerning an event that anyway had not seemed so important to me ("Junket of the Year: *'Les Intellos,'* " February 15, 1983). So Jack Lang, the French Minister of Culture, had convened at the Sorbonne several hundred intellectuals from around the world whose names, if not their work, were in most cases known to me. So what?

But then in the March 1 issue of *Le Monde* I was confronted with the "Ideas" page and I understood more clearly. In his *Wall Street Journal* article, Mr. Sokolov had written that the Paris conference, whose title was "Creation and Development," was notable chiefly for the vagueness of its substance and for the blatant anti-Americanism of its tone, with the television serial *Dallas* coming in "for the heaviest attacks." He then proceeded to offer some advice to Jack Lang:

> Instead of worrying about *Dallas*, Jack Lang should spend his time wondering why France is a nullity in contemporary, active world culture. Instead of posing as the savior of planetwide culture, he should ask himself why France has produced no novelists of real importance in twenty years, except Michel Tournier, why France has slipped out of view in the visual arts, why the whole world laughs at the bombast of traditional French rhetoric as it is still taught in archaic French schools and written at France's Ministry of Culture.

It was this apparently unforgivable cruelty to which the French and others were now responding.

The Turkish writer Yashar Kemal, who had himself attended the conference, was quoted in my copy of *Le Monde* as saying, "If President Mitterrand and Jack Lang had not been men of culture, such a colloquium would not have taken place." Then there was *Le Monde*'s Michel Deguy: "Let chief editor Solokov [*sic*] come here and discover *in detail* the richness, diversity, and significance of French literary, artistic, and scientific works; over the course of a year he could be shown everything and without being brainwashed he could assess it properly." Finally, another *Le Monde* staff writer, Dominique Dhombres: "What about Marguerite Duras, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Romain Gary, J.M.G. Le Clézio, or Marguerite Yourcenar?"

All right then, let us see. One worthwhile way of measuring these matters is to frequent good bookstores. There happens to be a very large one at Stanford. Six extremely long shelves are devoted to the recent output of university presses in America, which is to say the essence of scholarly publishing. If sheer quantity is taken as a standard of comparison—and for some purposes it should be—what is available in this one place outweighs by several dozen times the cumulative scholarly output of French universities. Assuming the rate of productivity is the same here as in France, the American output should only be about five times greater than the French. So far have the French fallen into academic arrears, indeed, that it makes one think of one of those great historic declines such as occurred in Spain in the 17th century or Italy in the 18th century in comparison with France and England. The effects of such a drop in status are not easily overcome. In the case of Spain and Italy, the reaction to the realization that they had been surpassed by others was not an attempt to catch up but rather the adoption of a siege mentality and a closed, self-defeating nationalism. Such is also the case today in France.

What about quality? I see on the shelves here at Stanford several scholarly editions of Montaigne, a critical edition of Amadis de Gaule, and, *in paperback*, new editions of Latin works by Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas which have never even been translated into French, not even in the 19th century when France was a more scholarly-minded country than today. I know that before university presses agree to publish such books, the manuscripts are submitted to committees of specialists who always require important revisions, painful to the authors, and which a Frenchman would regard as intolerable, in order to make them conform to the strictest standards of academic scholarship.

There's a corner devoted to contemporary French literature here (as there is to Spanish, German, and Russian). This is hardly surprising, since the French department of the university is well staffed. Here one finds many French paperbacks, Daudet and Marguerite Duras, Mme. de Sévigné and Simone de Beauvoir, Gide, Camus —everyone, in sum. It's touching to see how hard American university departments of French work to keep themselves *au courant*. *They* are not the ones who have ignored Robbe-Grillet, Duras, or Hélène Cixous. Quite the contrary! And when it comes to critical methodology, they have been sure to pay their respects to semiotics and deconstruction, to Tzvetan Todorov and Julia Kristeva (I cite these

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names at random and without judging them, since I am not ashamed to say that I have not read their work. After the age of fifty, one has the right to put, alongside one's actual library, a much larger imaginary library of books one has not read and will not read).

THE intellectual health of a country is measured as much by what it is able to receive as by what it is able to give. In other words, as much by translation as by "radiation." In the 19th century, Paris translated everything, and immediately. Thanks to this activity Frenchmen were able to write classic works about other nations (the United States, England, Russia) which these countries could not write about us. Today it would be interesting to place on one side of a scale the works of general history, art history, political science, and literary criticism written by American authors about France, and on the other side the works of French authors in these same fields about the United States. Even the last-minute pressure of Jack Lang's thumb could not bring the two sides into balance. (Daniel Boorstin's marvelous book, *The Americans,* is, I believe, about to be translated into French. It was first published in 1958.)

While we are still in the same bookstore let us stroll into the aisles devoted to "general" history, philosophy, literary criticism, and see if we can assess, by means of translations, the degree of French "radiation." Sartre: *Being and Nothingness.* Foucault: *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother. . . .* Derrida: *Margins.* And here, no less, a *Barthes Reader*! Not to mention the works of the Annales school of historians. Might you be interested in the "new philosophers"? Not a one is missing. On the dust jackets, the blurbs go on without end: "The most important," "epoch-making," "tremendous," "controversial," "great," and so on.

So what are we French grumbling about? Yet even I, an indefatigable patriot, am not happy. First of all, there isn't really all that much here. Among these tens of thousands of books, the translations from French are a little lost, and even my practiced nationalist eye has trouble spotting them. Then too, I can't help thinking: those books that I haven't bothered to read, why the devil should the Americans be reading them? There is so much real talent to be found on those shelves, so many fields of genuine interest, why should Americans have the slightest curiosity about our amusing Parisian specialties—especially since they are so often in bad taste?

Indeed, those circles in American intellectual life that remain serious understand perfectly well what is going on here, remember what France once stood for, and long for it. Yet America is a country that embraces many contrary tendencies: avant-gardes of various kinds, para-Marxist subcultures, sundry fake sciences, all of which are distinguished by a hatred for mainstream America and by a desire to affiliate elsewhere. It is in these circles that contemporary French culture "radiates" and finds its fans.

There's a danger here to which I should like to draw attention. Is it really in France's interest to replace the Frankfurt School as a supplier of marked-down ideological goods, intellectual gadgets for the American demi-intelligentsia? It may be the case that the overall position of French culture is no more important (or less important) than that of Italian or German culture. We cannot do anything about this; history has made it so. But at least we could insure that Americans of taste, knowledge, and discrimination honor and appreciate that position for what it really is. Such is not the case today.

Let us leave the campus and go into Palo Alto. On California Avenue there is a peculiarly Californian institution, a bookstore-*cum*-cafeteria which also serves as a kind of central cultural clearinghouse. It is here that I find *Le Monde,* the reading of which leaves me depressed for a couple of hours. But perhaps I am overly sensitive. The whole international press can be found here—Italian, German, English, as well as French—and this allows comparisons to be made fairly easily. They do not work to France's disadvantage. Compared with others, our fashion magazines, our journals of interior decoration and of photography are not at all bad. The culinary magazines are very good indeed, and this is no small thing since in American bookstores the cookbook section takes up more room than all the humanities combined. If there has truly been any genuine "radiation," it is there.

In the very important realm of material life and the arrangement of daily affairs, then, we still maintain our position. True, we don't dominate: I came across a profoundly knowledgeable and expert article on Beaujolais Nouveau—its history, geography, varieties, intrinsic qualities—in an English magazine. But at least we are not inferior, and in any case since we're different we're also interesting.

But in more elevated genres? Cixous, Barthes, etc.? About these in particular I am not an expert, but it seems to me that "we" (if I may use the term) are not, in fact, "nullities." We have a point of view, an angle of vision, a manner of apprehending things, all of which have value and should be taken into consideration. If we make such a bad impression on Americans like Raymond Sokolov, is that because of American arrogance, or imperialism, as some Frenchmen would have it? It is true that our habits of thought and intellectual customs are different, and offer natural resistance. But above all, it is cultural politics that come into play here.

AN AMERICAN friend asked me what the true status of French culture is these days. I responded that one should not expect a new Flaubert or Baudelaire to make his appearance, but that every year quite a few solid, original, talented, and thought-provoking books come out—not, to be sure, in quantities commensurate with the American output—which deserve to be read and which would benefit those Americans who read them. But if they remain unread, it is our own fault; it is because of our senseless cultural politics.

Instead of trying to acquaint others with what is good in French culture, the French prefer to represent themselves as a single entity,

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an *alternative* culture. Having created a nonexistent monster which we call American culture, we set against it an equally fabulous monster we call French culture—and to its banners we claim to have rallied all the disadvantaged "cultures" of the earth, the Senegalese, the Albanian, the Nicaraguan, what have you. We make pinups of writers and artists by endowing them with fixed, global qualities—and we then appoint them as ambassadors plenipotentiary of that same universal entity, "French culture." Do we have some merely good philosophers or historians among us? It little matters; they are only sentinels, or stars.

THUS have the French abandoned the notion of a *civilization*, at once singular and open to all, in favor of the notion of a unique, uncommunicable *culture*. We have abandoned a position in these matters which was always ours and taken a position once adopted by those opposed to the classic French conception of culture—by German Romantics, Russian Slavophiles, etc. We have made ourselves at home in the pathological world of cultural *ressentiment*, once upon a time the property of the underdeveloped. This we call progress.

In so doing, we have also given a false and distorted view of our true situation. In the United States we have run the risk of associating ourselves with one or another cultural ghetto, one of those avant-gardes that are always being born and always on the point of dying out and of which nothing remains when they depart from fashion. Of course real talent will always out—as, for example, J.P. Ponelle's production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* on American public television, or the Chéreau production of Wagner's *Ring*. I found both of these quite remarkable, each in its own way, and Americans were of the same opinion. But there are many estimable examples of French culture that are less dazzling and that will not gain an audience because they come wrapped in the artificial glare of pasteboard goods which we energetically try to sell but which over the long run do us no credit. If the object is prestige and influence, qualities to which our political-cultural elites are so sensitive, such misrepresentations of ourselves can only have a contrary effect. The cultural products of Italy, England, and Scandinavia have already gained readier acceptance than those of France.

This attitude, finally, is ruinous to our *own* cultural life. Moral philosophers taught us long ago that cultural pride brings its own punishment, which is cultural sterility. When France sparkled, it also learned from the culture of the Italians, the Spanish, the English, the Germans. Today, many Americans are still convinced that their literature is second-rate, their painting mediocre, their music deficient. This is not true, and anyway the attitude is changing. But what one does feel strongly is the diffidence of American culture, the polite welcome it gives to everything that appears exciting and that comes from elsewhere. Is it so difficult for the French to display a comparable humility, especially when its effects would be so obviously beneficial? Can we French go on allowing our national feeling to do so badly by our nation?

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## Fiction

# How Good Is Gabriel García Márquez?

*Joseph Epstein*

HOW good is Gabriel García Márquez? "Define your terms," I can hear some wise undergraduate reply. "What do you mean by *is*?" Yet I ask the question in earnest. Over the past weeks I have been reading García Márquez's four novels and three collections of stories—all of his work available in English translation—and I am still not certain how good he is. If I were to be asked how talented, I have a ready answer: pound for pound, as they used to put it in *Ring* magazine, Gabriel García Márquez may be the most talented writer at work in the world today. But talent is one thing; goodness, or greatness, quite another.

Valéry says somewhere that there ought to be a word to describe the literary condition between talent and genius. In writing about García Márquez, most contemporary American literary critics have not searched very hard for that word. Instead they have settled on calling

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him a genius and knocked off for the day. Thus, John Leonard speaks of "the genius of the mature García Márquez"; Alfred Kazin speaks of "the sign of Márquez's genius." A writer in the *New Republic* casually compares him with Proust and Joyce. "Classic" and "master" are two other words that pop up with a fair regularity in discussions of García Márquez.

In sum, no novelist now writing has a more enviable reputation. His is of course an international, a worldwide reputation—one capped by the Nobel Prize, won in 1982 at the age of fifty-four. The Nobel Prize can sometimes sink a writer, make him seem, even in his lifetime, a bit posthumous. But with García Márquez it appears to have had quite the reverse effect, making him seem more central, more prominent, more of a force. Before its initial appearance, the revived *Vanity Fair* magazine, which published García Márquez's slender novel *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in its first issue, ran what seemed like countless ads displaying the author's beaming mustachioed countenance, so that by now it may be fair to say that Gabriel García Márquez is, in North America, a household face.

IN LATIN AMERICA, Gabriel García Márquez has been a household name and face since 1967, when his famous novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was first published in Buenos Aires. This novel is said to have sold more than six million copies and to have been translated into more than thirty languages. Writing about its author in 1976 in the *New Yorker*, Alastair Reid noted: "The book was immediately moved by reviewers beyond criticism into that essential literary experience occupied by *Alice in Wonderland* and *Don Quixote*. Invoked as a classic, in a year it *became* a classic, and García Márquez, to his discomfort, a literary monument." I cannot vouch for the discomfort, but otherwise Reid's account appears accurate. Mario Vargas Llosa, the very able Peruvian novelist who has written a lengthy critical study of García Márquez said of this remarkable novel: "*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is one of those rare instances of a major contemporary work of literature which everyone can understand and enjoy." That, too, seems to me largely true, except that the first time I attempted to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* I thought it quite brilliant and stopped reading it at page 98 (of 383 pages in the paperback edition). A number of intelligent people I know have gone through a similar experience in reading the book. All thought it brilliant, but felt that anywhere from between eighteen to fifty-one years of solitude was sufficient, thank you very much. I shall return to what I think are the reasons for this.

AS FOR Gabriel García Márquez himself, he proves a highly complicating factor in the appreciation of his own novels. He was born in 1928, in Colombia, in the coastal town of Aracataca, was raised for the first eight years of his life by his grandparents, and later studied law at the University of Bogotá. He lived for a spell in Europe, as many Latin American intellectuals and writers seem to do, chiefly in Paris and in Rome, working as a journalist for various papers and for a time for Fidel Castro's Cuban news agency, *Prensa Latina*. A very political character—he describes himself as "an emergency politician"—García Márquez is without equivocation a man of the Left, and if not an orthodox Marxist, still indisputably devoted to the cause of Castroite revolution in Latin America. He has recently been called (in the New York *Times Magazine*) "the most active of the continent's writer-politicians, frequently to be seen in the company of world leaders from Managua to New Delhi."

Not long ago García Márquez told an interviewer from *Playboy*: "I feel myself *Latin American* in the broadest sense. As such, I use my international reputation to conduct what might be called extra-official diplomacy. I have friends, at high levels, in governments in Europe and Latin America." Fidel Castro is among these friends, and in this same *Playboy* interview García Márquez talks about supplying Castro with books whenever he goes to Cuba. Of Castro he says, in a line that to me sounds like no one so much as Woody Allen, "The man knows *everything* there is to know about seafood."

Lots of lines quite as zany as that seem to arise in connection with Latin American literary life. For example, in the same article in which García Márquez is described as "the most active of the continent's writer-politicians," the author of the article, Alan Riding, chief of the New York *Times* Mexico City bureau, notes, with a straight face: "Since the revolution [in Nicaragua], some fifty poetry workshops have sprung up in the army, police, and the trade unions, and even in peasant organizations." Now why does that line seem vaguely ludicrous? And why, moreover, is it only about a country in Latin America that one would dare to attribute so insubstantial an item to revolutionary progress?

SHORT of going to Latin American countries on extended visits, how does one find out anything about them? Whom does one trust? New York *Times* reporters capable of prattling on about fifty new poetry workshops in Nicaragua? American novelists—Robert Stone, Joan Didion—who have put in cameo appearances in one or another Latin American country and then returned to write about it? Academic experts, the kernels of whose true information are not easily freed of their ideological husks? Perhaps native writers? On this last count, I have recently read a most charming novel set in Lima, Peru, *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, by Mario Vargas Llosa, which gives us a portrait of daily life—corrupt, incompetent, sadly provincial though it is—very different from that which Gabriel García Márquez supplies. Whom is one to believe?

So many oddities crop up. How, for example, explain that García Márquez had his famous novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a book that he has claimed is an argument for change in Latin America, published in Argentina, universally regarded—to hear Jacobo Timerman tell it—as the most repressive of

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Latin American countries? How for that matter explain the emergence of Latin American literature to a place very near contemporary preeminence? How does one reconcile these various paradoxes, contradictions, confusions? It may be that finally, in reading about Latin America, one has to settle for the virtue which Sir Lewis Namier once said was conferred by sound historical training—a fairly good sense of how things did *not* happen.

SUCH a sense becomes especially useful in reading a writer like Gabriel García Márquez, who is continually telling us how things did happen. What he is saying is not very new. He speaks of the depredations upon the poor by the rich, upon the pure by the corrupt, upon the indigenous by the colonial—standard stuff, for the most part. But how he says it is new and can be very potent indeed. So much so that Fidel Castro is supposed to have remarked of him, "García Márquez is the most powerful man in Latin America." When presented with that remark in his *Playboy* interview, García Márquez responded that if Castro "did say that, I'm sure he was referring to me as a writer, not as a political man."

But are the lines so easily drawn? In her recent book, *Salvador*,* Joan Didion ends a brief account of a televised Señorita El Salvador contest by writing that "it occurred to me that this was a contest in which winning meant more than a scholarship or a screen test or a new wardrobe; winning here could mean the difference between life and casual death, a provisional safe-conduct not only for the winner but for her entire family." Miss Didion then quotes a passage from García Márquez's surreal novel about unmitigated evil, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, and closes by noting that "I began to see Gabriel García Márquez in a new light, as a social realist." Here perhaps is what Fidel Castro had in mind when he called García Márquez the most powerful man in Latin America.

None of this power would exist, of course, if García Márquez were not a considerable artist. Literary artists make us see things, and differently from the way we have ever seen them before; they make us see things *their* way. We agree to this willingly because in the first place they make things interesting, charming, seductive, and in the second place they hold out the promise of telling us important secrets that we would be fools not to want to know. The first paragraph of García Márquez's first novel (novella, more precisely), *Leaf Storm*, begins thus:

> —Suddenly, as if a whirlwind had set down roots in the center of the town, the banana company arrived, pursued by the leaf storm. A whirling leaf storm had been stirred up, formed out of the human and material dregs of other towns, the chaff of a civil war that seemed ever more remote and unlikely. The whirlwind was implacable. It contaminated everything with its swirling crowd smell, the smell of skin secretion and hidden death. In less than a year it sowed over the town the rubble of many catastrophes that had come before it, scattering its mixed cargo of rubbish in the streets. And all of a sudden that rubbish, in time to the mad and unpredicted rhythm of the storm, was being sorted out, individualized, until what had been a narrow street with a river at one end and a corral for the dead at the other was changed into a different and more complex town, created out of the rubbish of other towns.

One senses, straightaway, that one is in the presence of the real thing here. (Gregory Rabassa's translations, considered as English writing, seem to me, as to everyone else who has commented on them, absolutely first-class.) Sweep and power are readily available to García Márquez; so, too, are what seem like endless lovely touches, such as a man described as "lame in body and sound in conscience." In "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," a charming tale about a time when people had hearts capacious enough for the poetic, the way is prepared for a man "to sink easily into the deepest waves, where fish are blind and divers die of nostalgia." The movements of a woman in the story "There Are No Thieves in *This* Town" have "the gentle efficiency of people who are used to reality." A man in the story "One Day After Saturday" is caught at an instant when "he was aware of his entire weight: the weight of his body, his sins, and his age altogether." García Márquez's stories are studded with such charming bits: a woman with "passionate health," a man with a "mentholated voice," a town "where the goats committed suicide from desolation," another man with "a pair of lukewarm languid hands that always looked as if they'd just been shaved." García Márquez, as Milton Berle used to say of himself, has a million of them.

This fecundity of phrase was not always so readily available to García Márquez. Today his fame is such that his very earliest works are being reprinted and translated —most of them are in the collection *Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories*—and these early stories are dreary in the extreme: dryly abstract, bleak, cut-rate Kafka, without the Kafkaesque edge or the humor. As a novelist, García Márquez seems to have come alive when he began to write about the coastal town he calls Macondo and—the two events seem to have taken place simultaneously—when, by adding the vinegar of politics to his writing, he gave it a certain literary tartness.

García Márquez has claimed William Faulkner as a literary mentor, and the two do have much in common. Each has staked out a territory of his own—Yoknapatawpha County for Faulkner, Macondo and its environs for García Márquez; each deals lengthily with the past and its generations; and finally, each relies on certain prelapsarian myths (Southern grandeur before the American Civil War, Latin American poetic serenity before the advent of modernity and foreign intervention) to bind his work together. There is, though, this decisive difference between the two writers: Faulkner's fiction is almost wholly taken up with the past, while that of García Márquez, as befits a politically minded writer,

* Reviewed by Mark Falcoff on page 66 of this issue—ED.

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generally keeps an eye out for the future.

Immersion in the work of such writers provides one of those experiences—perhaps it might be called moral tourism—exclusive to literature. By reading a good deal about a place rendered by a powerful writer, in time one comes to feel one has walked its streets, knows its history and geography, the rhythms of its daily life. Only certain writers can convey this experience through the page: Balzac did it both for Paris and French provincial towns; Faulkner did it; Isaac Bashevis Singer does it for Jewish Poland; and García Márquez does it, too.

MACONDO—read enough Gabriel García Márquez and you will come to feel you know the town. The almond trees, the failing movie theater, the bells tolling out whether or not that evening's movie is censored by the Church, the fly excrement, the brothel providing modest conviviality and certain relief, the billiard hall, the dead mice, the sea and the dock where ships stop but rarely, the mayors either corrupt or stupid and usually both, the endless rains of October, the air thick with flying ants, the fog of mosquitoes, the streets either dusty or muddy, the houses where widows hole up for decades, where men walk out and meet their humid deaths by stabbing, where the dentist without a degree has his office, the old Arab section where the Syrians set out their wares on tables on market days, where the mail comes only on Friday—Macondo, you can't miss it, it's the next town up from Riohacha.

Viewed in retrospect, the Macondo stories—they are found in *Leaf Storm and Other Stories* and *No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Stories*, and the town is also the setting for the novel *In Evil Hour*—appear to be an elaborate warm-up for the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. They seem to be sketches, trial runs, dress rehearsals for the big novel ahead. In these stories names will appear in passing—like Colonel Aureliano Buendía, one of the heroes of *One Hundred Years*—almost as if they were coming attractions. Then, working the other way around, incidents occur in *One Hundred Years* that have been the subjects of whole stories in the earlier volumes. To know fully what is going on in García Márquez one has to have read the author in his entirety. In these stories the stages in García Márquez's literary development are on display, rather like specimens inside formaldehyde-filled jars showing progress from zygote to fully formed human. One reads these stories and witnesses his talent growing, his political ardor increasing. In these stories, too, García Márquez shows his taste for that blend of fantasy and hyperbole, exhibited in a context of reality, that is known as magic realism.

Magic realism is the blotting-paper phrase that has absorbed much critical ink on the subject of Latin American fiction. A blurring of the magical with the real, it works differently in different hands. In Demetrio Aquilera-Malta's novel *Seven Serpents and Seven Moons*, for example, a pirate screws out his eye to take a closer look at someone; or a wooden Jesus Christ will leave his crucifix to bum a cigarette, then climb back up on the cross. Thus are the mythical and the real, the ethereal and the mundane, mated and mixed. The ideological is often included as well. In García Márquez's story "Big Mama's Funeral," an account of the death of a woman of fabled wealth, the woman dictates to a notary the following list of her "invisible estate":

> The wealth of the subsoil, the territorial waters, the colors of the flag, national sovereignty, the traditional parties, the rights of man, civil rights, the nation's leadership, the right of appeal, Congressional hearings, letters of recommendation, historical records, free elections, beauty queens, transcendental speeches, huge demonstrations, distinguished young ladies, proper gentlemen, punctilious military men, His Illustrious Eminence, the Supreme Court, goods whose importation was forbidden, liberal ladies, the meat problem, the purity of language, setting a good example, the free but responsible press, the Athens of South America, public opinion, the lessons of democracy, Christian morality, the shortage of foreign exchange, the right of asylum, the Communist menace, the ship of state, the high cost of living, republican traditions, the underprivileged classes, statements of political support.
>
> She didn't manage to finish. The laborious enumeration cut off her last breath. Drowning in the pandemonium of abstract formulas which for two centuries had constituted the moral justification of the family's power, Big Mama emitted a loud belch and expired.

"WHAT I like about you," says one character to another in the García Márquez story "The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother," "is the serious way you make up nonsense." Serious nonsense might stand as a blurb line for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. E.M. Forster remarked that at a certain age one loses interest in the development of writers and wants to know only about the creation of masterpieces. Certainly *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has everywhere been so acclaimed. The novel is a chronicle of six generations of the Buendía family, founders of the village of Macondo. It recounts such extraordinary happenings as Macondo's insomnia plague, its thirty-two civil wars, banana fever, revolution, strikes, a rain that lasts five years, marriages, intermarriages, madness, and the eventual extinction of the Buendía line with the birth of an infant who has a pig's tail and who is eventually carried off by ants.

"*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is not a history of Latin America," García Márquez has said, "it is a *metaphor* for Latin America." With that quotation we are already in trouble. What can it mean to say that a novel is a metaphor for a continent?

Before attempting to ascertain what it might mean, tribute must be paid to the sheer brimming brilliance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. "Dazzling" does not seem to me in any way an imprecise word to describe the style of this novel, nor "epic" any less imprecise a word to describe its ambitions. Its

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contents cannot be recapitulated, for in its pages fireworks of one kind or another are always shooting off. Disquisitions on history, memory, time wind in and out of the plot. Yellow flowers fall from the sky marking a man's death; a heart-meltingly beautiful girl ascends to heaven while folding a sheet, a girl whose very smell "kept on torturing men beyond death, right down to the dust of their bones." Everything is grand, poetic, funny, often at once. A man suffers "flatulence that withered the flowers"; a woman has "a generous heart and a magnificent vocation for love." Then there is Colonel Aureliano Buendía, of whom García Márquez writes:

> Colonel Aureliano Buendía organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad. He lived through a dose of strychnine in his coffee that was enough to kill a horse. He refused the Order of Merit, which the President of the Republic awarded him. He rose to be Commander in Chief of the revolutionary forces, with jurisdiction and command from one border to the other, and the man most feared by the government, but he never let himself be photographed.

The novel's ending loops back upon itself brilliantly, so that at the close the last of the Buendía men, sitting in his room at the beginning of a cyclone, has finally deciphered a coded Sanskrit manuscript that tells the history of the Buendías, including the end of the family and of the town of Macondo in a cyclone. Here is a sense of an ending—with trumpets.

And yet—why do so many readers seem to bog down in this glittering work? Part of the difficulty seems to me technical, part psychological. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is peculiarly a novel without pace; it is, for its nearly four-hundred pages, all high notes, service aces, twenty-one-gun salutes. In a novel, such nonstop virtuosity tends to pall. To use a simile to describe a novel that its author describes as a metaphor, reading *One Hundred Years* is like watching a circus artist on the trampoline who does only quadruple back somersaults. At first you are amazed to see him do it; then you are astonished that he can keep it up for so long; then you begin to wonder when he is going to be done, frankly you'd like to see something less spectacular, like a heavy-legged woman on an aged elephant.

Unless, that is, you sense a deeper meaning beneath all this virtuosity. And here it must be said that there has been no shortage of deep readings of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel which, if critics are to be consulted, has more levels than a ziggurat. There are those who think that the true meaning of the novel is solitude, or, as Alastair Reid puts it, "We all live alone on this earth in our own glass bubbles." There are those who think that the novel is about writing itself; thus, D.P. Gallagher, an Oxford literature don, writes that "one of the novel's fundamental aims is to tell us something about the nature of contemporary Latin American writing on which we shall see that it acts as a kind of interpretative meditation." There are those who are fascinated with the book's allusiveness; an acquaintance of mine, a great García Márquez fan, said, "Don't you suppose you really have to know a good deal about South American Indian myth to know what's going on in the novel?" There are those who believe that the stuff of myth ought not to be looked at too closely; thus John Leonard, who can always be counted upon for the flashy phrase, says, apropos of the writing of García Márquez, "dreams redeem." Then there is García Márquez himself, who has given a clear political reading to his own novel, commenting, in an interview, "I did want to give the idea that Latin American history had such an oppressive reality that it had to be changed—at all costs, at any price!"

Modern taste in literature runs to interesting ambiguities. "Literature is the instrument neither of a whole thought nor of an organized thought," wrote Valéry, in a sentiment for which Schlegel prepared the ground more than a century before when he wrote, "the freedom of the poet shall suffer no law to be imposed upon it." But how much freedom ought to be allowed? If we are unwilling to hold literature to a certain standard of intellectual responsibility, are we not ultimately refusing to take it seriously?

A case in point is García Márquez's use of numbers in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For the most part he uses them to hyperbolic effect by exaggerating with comic precision. Thus the great rain storm in Macondo lasts "four years, eleven months, and two days"; one of the Buendía daughters during school holidays brings home seventy-two classmates and nuns; note, too, the numbers used in the passage quoted above on Colonel Aureliano Buendía. But in a key section of *One Hundred Years*, a strike of banana workers, precision gives way to imprecision: "more than 3,000" striking workers are murdered by federal troops, their bodies carted away in a train "with almost 200 freight cars and a locomotive at either end and a third one in the middle."

When queried about this number, García Márquez readily owned up to the exaggeration built into the figure, saying:

> There were very few deaths. If 100 people had been killed in 1928 it would have been catastrophic. I made the death toll 3,000 because I was using certain proportions in my book. One hundred wouldn't have been noticed. I was also interested in achieving a certain imagery: I wanted the bodies to be taken away in a train, a train such as the ones that were loaded with clusters of bananas. I did research and found that to fill such a train, you'd need at least 3,000 bodies. Three thousand in 1928 would have been *all* the residents of the town.

But if García Márquez owns that the number of people killed was at most 100, perhaps, allowing for exaggeration, it was in reality twenty, or even ten. Who knows?

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Along with magic realism, Gabriel García Márquez has given us another new literary-critical label, "political realism," which, in its own way, is itself quite magical.

IF *One Hundred Years of Solitude* leaves any doubt about the political intent of García Márquez's mature work, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* wipes that doubt away. When García Márquez says that *One Hundred Years* is a metaphor for Latin America, he is of course putting a political interpretation on his own novel. But *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is neither metaphor nor symbol but a direct representation of a strong political point of view. The novel is about the life of a dictator, the type of *el caudillo,* in an unnamed Caribbean country, though to put it that way is rather like saying that Joyce's *Ulysses* is about a Jew walking around Dublin one day in June 1904.

The dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* lives for more than two hundred years, his demise, *à la* Mark Twain, being often reported but much exaggerated. He has been in power—he has been *the* power—longer than anyone can remember, and his is the greatest solitude of all: that of the unloved dictator perpetuating his unearned power. This man, who himself can neither read nor write, is described, examined, and prosecuted with the aid of a novelistic technique as relentlessly modernist as any in contemporary fiction.

*The Autumn of the Patriarch* is divided into six chapters, but that is the only division in the novel, and the only concession to the reader's convenience. The book has no paragraphs, and while the punctuation mark known as the period may show up from time to time, the novel's sentences are not what one normally thinks of as sentences at all. A sentence might begin from one point of view, and before it is finished include three or four others.

The structure of the novel is built upon what García Márquez has called "multiple monologue," but on the level of sentences it works along the lines of the following:

> They did not spread the news immediately that time either, contrary to what he expected, but many prudent hours passed with clandestine investigations, secret agreements, among the heirs of the regime who were trying to gain time by denying the rumor of death with all manner of contrary versions, they brought his mother Benedición Alvarado out into the commercial district to show that she was not wearing a mourning face, they dressed me in a flowered dress like a chippy, sir, they made me buy a macaw-feather hat so that everybody would see me happy, they made me. . . .

And so on.

This is García Márquez working out of the James Joyce tradition, attempting, through literary technique, to capture on the page, with Joycean ambition, the whole of life. The effects García Márquez achieves are brilliant, often breathtakingly so, though often, too, as in all militantly modernist writing, one has the feeling that art is imitating art rather more than nature. But between Joyce and García Márquez there is a difference: James Joyce, though scarcely anyone's notion of a large-hearted man, loved his characters; while Gabriel García Márquez, nearly everyone's notion of a large-hearted man, reveals for his an unsurpassed loathing.

ONE of the small shocks of this novel is to see the most complex modernist techniques put to the most patent political purposes. Now it must be said that García Márquez did not invent the Latin American dictator. Trujillo, Batista, Perón, Hernández Martinez, Duvalier (dare one add the name Fidel Castro?)—one could put together a pretty fair All Star team, though these boys are bush league compared with what Europe and Asia in this century have been able to produce.

García Márquez's portrait of the dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is an amalgam of Latin America's dictators, minus the great seafood man Fidel and with a touch or two of Franco added. As a picture of squalor, rot, and bestiality, it is devastating. The devastation is in the details, of which the endlessly inventive García Márquez is never in short supply. Let one incident suffice here. The dictator learns he has been betrayed by the one crony he thought reliable; shortly after learning of this betrayal he invites to dinner the main military men of his regime,

> . . . and then the curtains parted and the distinguished Major General Rodrigo de Aguilar entered on a silver tray stretched out full length on a garnish of cauliflower and laurel leaves, steeped with spices, oven brown, embellished with the uniform of five golden almonds for solemn occasions and the limitless loops for valor on the sleeve of his right arm, fourteen pounds of medals on his chest and a sprig of parsley in his mouth, ready to be served at a banquet of comrades by the official carvers to the petrified horror of the guests as without breathing we witness the exquisite ceremony of carving and serving, and when every plate held an equal portion of the minister of defense stuffed with pine nuts and aromatic herbs, he gave the order to begin, eat hearty gentlemen.

*The Autumn of the Patriarch* is about more than politics alone—time and the nature of illusion are motifs played upon artfully throughout—but politics give the novel its impetus and are finally its chief subject. These politics are highly selective, predictable, more than a trifle clichéd. Octavio Paz has said that García Márquez, as a political thinker, "repeats slogans." As a novelist, he can make these slogans vivid, even funny, but they remain slogans. For example, the attacks on the United States in this novel come through the dictator's continuous dealings with a stream of U.S. ambassadors of perfectly Waspish and quite forgettable names—Warren, Thompson, Evans, Wilson—who in the end succeed in swindling him out of the very sea. Americans, the Catholic Church, politicians, all, in the mind and in the novels of Gabriel García Márquez, are swindlers. Liberals or conservatives, it does not matter which, they are crooks, every one of them. Which leaves—doesn't it?—only one solution: revolution.

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So TALENTED a writer is García Márquez that he can sustain a longish tale on sheer storytelling power alone, as he does in his most recent book, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold.** It has been said of García Márquez that he combines the two powerful traditions of Latin American writing: the left-wing engagé tradition of the Communist poet Pablo Neruda and the modernist mandarin tradition of Jorge Luis Borges. In this slender novel it is the Borges side that predominates. The book is about a plot on the part of twin brothers who are out to avenge their family's honor against a young man who they mistakenly believe has deflowered their sister, thus causing her husband to return her in shame to her family the morning after the wedding night. In fact, the brothers wish to give the young man every chance to avoid their slaughtering him, so they bruit it about the town that they are looking for him, which ought to give him sufficient opportunity to escape his fate. Through a most unusual absence of the usual concatenation of circumstances, no one is able to warn the young man, and so, because the brothers feel compelled to carry on a barbarous tradition, he is massacred at the door of his own home.

As always with García Márquez's work, there are wondrous fine touches throughout. After the murder, one of the brothers, in talking about his repeated stabbing of the young man, says, "I felt the way you do when you're galloping on horseback." The victim, a fastidious gent, falls with his entrails in his hands—this is a most gory tale—but then, in the words of an eyewitness, "He even took care to brush off the dirt that was stuck to his guts." Magic realism crops up in details little and large. After the murder the despoiled virgin and disappointed bride, now living in another town, writes almost two thousand letters to her husband-of-one-night, who never reads any of them, yet seventeen years later, fat and now losing his hair, returns to live with her. The tale is told with such subtle organization and such complete fluency that García Márquez can insert anything he wishes into it; and indeed the narrator does insert mention of his marriage proposal to his own wife and a brief account of his youthful dalliances with prostitutes. Such is the easy mastery of this novel that the reader is likely to forget that he never does learn who actually did deflower the virgin. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a handsomely written and inconsequential book of a kind that offers ample leeway for deep readings, and one that could have been composed only by a hugely gifted writer.

"INTELLECTUALS consider themselves to be the moral conscience of society," García Márquez is quoted as saying in the New York *Times Magazine,* "so their analyses invariably follow moral rather than political channels. In this sense, I think I am the most politicized of them all." Yet, oddly, in García Márquez's fiction morality is rarely an issue; García Márquez himself seems little interested in moral questions, or in the conflicts, gradations, and agonies of moral turmoil. The reason for this, I suspect, is that for him the moral universe is already set—for him, as for so many revolutionary intellectuals, there are the moral grievances of the past, the moral hypocrisies of the present, and, waiting over the horizon, the glories of the future, when moral complexity will be abolished. The moral question is, for García Márquez, ultimately a political question. Outside of his politics, García Márquez's stories and novels have no moral center; they inhabit no moral universe. They are passionate chiefly when they are political; and when they are political, so strong is the nature of their political bias that they are, however dazzling, flawed.

Thus, to return to where I set out, a short answer to my question —how good is Gabriel García Márquez?—is that he is, in the strict sense of the word, marvelous. The pity is that he is not better.

* Knopf, 120 pp., $10.95.

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# Books in Review

## Two Weeks

SALVADOR. By JOAN DIDION. *Simon & Schuster. 108 pp. $12.95.*

*Reviewed by* MARK FALCOFF

SOMETIME in late 1982 the novelist Joan Didion spent two weeks in El Salvador with her husband John Gregory Dunne. The result is this pamphlet-sized book, which has also appeared in the form of two extended articles in the *New York Review of Books.* Although it has already added a bit of literary panache to the otherwise dreary discussion of U.S. foreign policy in Central America, there is another more serious purpose to this work, which might be defined by establishing first what *Salvador* is not.

It is not one of those romantic volumes exalting the revolutionary cause of the Salvadoran guerrillas, in the fashion of Frances FitzGerald or Mary McCarthy reporting from Vietnam. Indeed, the rebels are hardly mentioned in this book, and not, I think, simply because Miss Didion failed to visit insurgent territory.

Nor is it yet one more brief in favor of "negotiations," however murkily defined, with a still more murkily defined enemy (though toward the end Miss Didion does insert an obligatory paragraph mentioning the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the revolutionary Left, only to reject it as coming too late in the day).

Rather, *Salvador* is an exhaustive and picturesque catalogue of all the vices of Salvadoran society, juxtaposed with descriptions of the relentlessly optimistic posturing of U.S. embassy officials in San Salvador and the staff of our military and AID missions. Miss Didion utilizes her pen as a sort of zoom lens, shifting rapidly and in close focus from decomposing corpses on a country road to the sinister features of troglodyte generals and corrupt politicians, from the squalor of rural villages to the false glitter of roller discos and Miss Universe pageants. Folded into these sketches (presumably expanded from journal entries) are excerpts from the U.S. and Salvadoran press, from official documents, and also from "documents" of less readily ascertainable authority.

Since Miss Didion is a writer of exceptional talent, the impact is precisely what is intended: to convince us that El Salvador is the quintessential Heart of Darkness—a black hole into which even the best of deeds and intentions are bound to disappear. As she puts it in a characteristically Catholic metaphor, "At this time and in this place, the light of the world could be construed as out, off, extinguished." Miss Didion does not believe that things would get better if the United States abandoned El Salvador—indeed, quite possibly they would get considerably worse. But she wishes us to know that this *is* the nature of the beast; once we have absorbed this knowledge, we need not trouble our hearts (or our consciences) about the future.

Obviously, this is a far more alluring position for an intellectual to adopt than the more chancy "progressive" notions about El Salvador mindlessly retailed by radical nuns, out-of-work diplomats, and "peace" activists—with Miss Didion, at least, one is insured against any eventual embarrassments. Small wonder that *Salvador* has been greeted with almost unreserved praise by the prestige press, including reviewers who did not particularly like her earlier work, *A Book of Common Prayer,* a novel that was far more sophisticated in its views of Latin America (and, also, more mordant in its depiction of American liberals) than *Salvador.*

With *Salvador,* however, there are two big problems. One has to do with the facts, the other with Joan Didion. There are some serious inaccuracies in the text, and many, many more half-truths. Considerations of space make it impossible to enumerate all of them, but perhaps a few will suffice to give the flavor of the whole.

*Item.* Miss Didion refers to her attempt to visit the village of Mozote in the Department of Morazán. Here, we are told, during an "armed-forces operation in December . . . 1981 . . . the hamlet of Mozote was completely wiped out." We are not told this directly by Miss Didion, but through a quotation from a report prepared by the "Americas Watch Committee and the American Civil Liberties Union." From this one would not know that the original press reports about this "operation" in the New York *Times* and Washington *Post* were subsequently discredited. As it turned out, these reports had claimed a civilian death rate in excess of *three times* the population of the village before the fighting began.

*Item.* "The small office on the archdiocese grounds where the scrapbooks of the dead are kept is still called . . . 'the Human Rights Commission' . . . but in fact both the Human Rights Commission and Socorro Jurídico, the archdiocesan legal aid office, were ordered in the spring of 1982 to vacate the church property." True enough. What we are not told is that these apparently worthy organizations were expelled from the cathedral precincts because both of them were misrepresenting the facts, and Socorro Jurídico was misrepresenting the nature of its relationship with the church.

*Item.* At least twice Miss Didion suggests, or seems to suggest, that the solution to El Salvador's problems lies "somewhere else, in Mexico, or Panama, or Washington." Mexico, perhaps. That is where the guerrilla headquarters-in-exile is located. But why Panama? And why the strange omission of Managua? Or Havana? With all her ostentatious document-mongering, Miss Didion might have bothered to leaf through the document book released with the U.S. State Department White Paper, which illus-

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trates the critical role played by both the Cuban and Nicaraguan governments in organizing and provisioning the Salvadoran revolutionary Left.

*Item.* Miss Didion quotes, with apparent approval, a July 1982 study prepared in New York by the Lawyers' Committe for International Human Rights, in which it is alleged that the burned van of the four American churchwomen killed in El Salvador in December 1980 displayed a red paint splotch that might be linked to a "red Toyota ¾ ton pickup." "By February 1981," the report continues,

> the Maryknoll Sisters' Office of Social Concerns, which has been actively monitoring the investigation, received word from a source *which it considered reliable* that the FBI had matched the red splotch . . . with a red Toyota pickup belonging to the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador. . . . [S]ubsequent to the FBI's alleged matching of the paint splotch and a Sheraton truck, the State Department has claimed, in a communication with the families of the churchwomen, that the FBI could not determine the source of the paint scraping. [Emphasis added]

Leaving aside for the moment the Maryknolls' peculiar research methodologies, one can only wonder why Miss Didion finds it credible that the State Department would wish to delay the resolution of probably the biggest single issue surrounding the fight over aid to El Salvador in the U.S. Congress—unless, of course, she agrees with the clear innuendo that the American government (i.e., in this case the Carter administration) had something to do with the killing of the nuns. She does not say that. But in citing this fragment without comment, what does she expect *us* to infer?

*Item.* Miss Didion dismisses the March 1982 election in El Salvador —one of the most carefully and widely monitored elections ever held anywhere, as inauthentic. "In any case," she writes, "no one really knew how many eligible voters there were in El Salvador, or even how many people. In any case, it had seemed necessary to provide a number. In any case, the election was over, a success, *la solución pacífica*." Miss Didion is under no obligation whatever to like elections or *soluciones pacíficas*—in El Salvador or even in her own country. But the fact that the Salvadoran elections bolstered the position of the U.S. government *in no way* invalidates the actual statistics of voter participation, which were exceptional even by U.S. standards.

*Item.* Miss Didion attempts to discredit the work of U.S. intelligence in El Salvador. She cites a report released by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives, *U.S. Intelligence Performance in Central America: Achievements and Selected Instances of Concern.* To this report she attributes the notion that "the intelligence was itself a dreamwork, tending to support policy, the report read, 'rather than inform it,' providing 'reinforcement more than illumination,' '"ammunition" rather than analysis.'" Now, *some* of the passages Miss Didion quotes do appear in this report, but intended in a very different sense from the one she conveys in her paraphrase. The report refers not to "the intelligence" generally but to *specific instances* of intelligence-gathering, in this case precisely six, and it concludes not that these were a "dreamwork" but that "the intelligence community has contributed significantly to meet the needs of policy-makers on Central America." The report goes on: "Over the last two years perhaps its greatest achievement lies in determining with considerable accuracy the organization and activities of the Salvadoran guerrillas, and in detecting the assistance given to them by Cuba and other Communist countries." As for the negative words cited by Miss Didion, they do appear in the conclusion, but they refer there to occasional abuses and are meant as a caution not a wholesale condemnation:

> Taken as a whole, intelligence on Central America is strong, and its task is both difficult and particularly important. The criticisms voiced in this report must be seen in that context. The basic concern is that tendentious rhetoric, including occasional oversimplification and misstatement, can drive out some of the needed collection and analysis. This may occur in a context in which intelligence users demand reinforcement rather than illumination, but this fact does not absolve the intelligence producer from responsibility for quality. The influence of the consumer desires for "ammunition" rather than analysis can be subtle or forceful, but its effects upon the intelligence process can become costly. Therefore, it deserves the constant watchfulness of intelligence professionals.

WHAT is even more disturbing about *Salvador* than Miss Didion's disingenuous use of facts and fugitive quotations is the way in which she makes the tiny republic of El Salvador into a mirror reflecting her own basic contempt for liberal democracy and—why not say it?—the American way of life. Thus, elections are almost by definition a sham, and even if they are not, they are ultimately undesirable since they only reinforce the status quo. (Could she have in mind the 1980 elections in the United States?) Land reform is worthless. Roy Prosterman, architect of the program in El Salvador that is supported by the AFL-CIO, is dispensed with by noting that the program he is helping to implement in El Salvador is the same one that was administered in Vietnam; there is no mention of similar, *successful* programs in Japan and Taiwan, where insurgents armed and trained by foreign powers were not present to interrupt the peaceful course of events.

Perhaps the most outrageous passage in the entire book is the one mockingly describing a large American-style shopping mall in downtown San Salvador:

> I found no Halazone at the Metrocenter but became absorbed in making notes about the mall itself, about the Muzak playing "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" and "American Pie" (". . . *singing this will be the day that I die* . . .") although the record store featured a cassette called *Classics of Paraguay*, about the *paté de foie gras* for sale in the supermarket, about the guard who did the weapons

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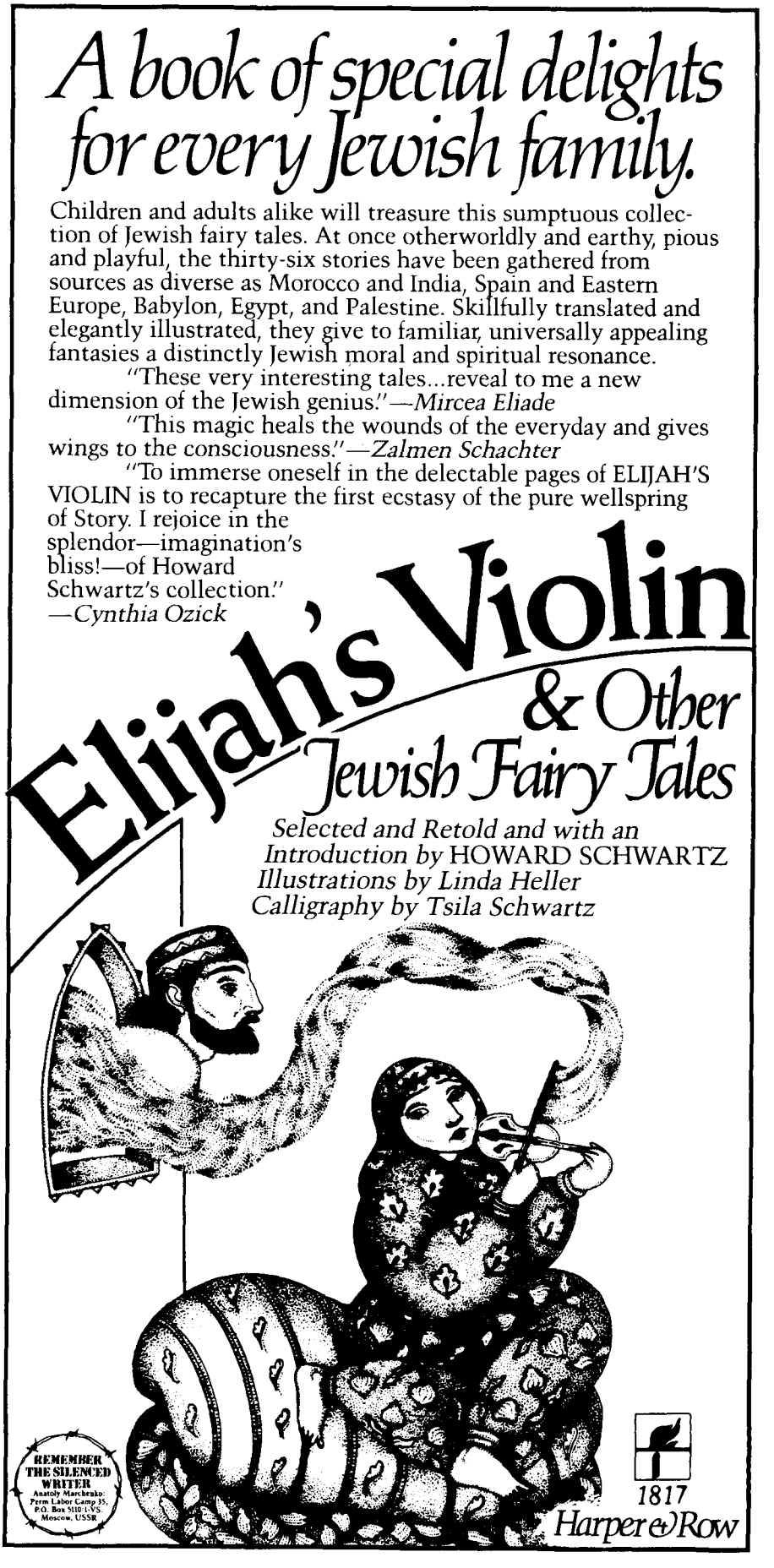
check on everyone who entered the supermarket, about the young matrons in tight Sergio Valente jeans, trailing maids and babies behind them and buying towels, big beach towels printed with maps of Manhattan that featured Bloomingdale's; about the number of things for sale that seemed to suggest a fashion for "smart drinking," to evoke modish cocktail hours. There were bottles of Stolichnaya vodka packaged with glasses and mixer, there were ice buckets, there were bar carts of every conceivable design, displayed with sample bottles.

This was the shopping center that embodied the future for which El Salvador was presumably being saved. . . .

Although this passage has been singled out for special admiration by reviewers who share its attitude of sneering disdain, Joan Didion is nevertheless right: beach towels with maps of Manhattan *are* the future for which El Salvador "presumably [is] being saved." They represent choice and opportunity, prosperity and freedom—things Miss Didion possesses in sufficient abundance to hold them cheap, particularly when others reach out for them. Her disparaging comments about elections and land reform, her thinly-veiled clericalism, and her contempt for the middle class and its works all come together here.

It is perfectly possible that all the hopes and illusions that have nourished our Central American policy under both Carter and Reagan will come to naught. The American people are divided, confused, unwilling to concern themselves with the issues and their costs. As for the Central American revolutionaries (and their Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Soviet sponsors), they, after all, have nothing else to do. El Salvador is a country with more than its share of inequality and injustice, and constitutional democracy—even in the limited Latin American sense—may never "take" there. But it is one thing to acknowledge these harsh realities and seek to work around them; another to write off an entire country, along with one's own national values. The latter spirit is the spirit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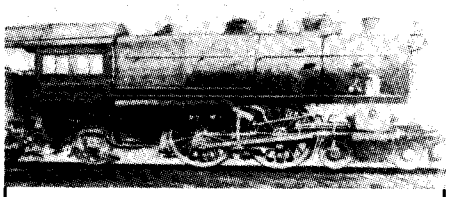

**"In an age of ideology, the inventions of ideologues have come to seem plausible, even though they are fantastic."**

This phrase is from Kenneth S. Lynn's Falsifying Jefferson, one of the essays in his collection, THE AIR-LINE TO SEATTLE. It illustrates the theme of the book: that too many current commentators on the American past see it through a mist of preconceived notions. Instead of respecting the evidence they profess to study, Lynn holds, these commentators impose on it precooked formulas that tell us more about the writers' own sensibilities than about America.

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of *Salvador*, of Miss Didion, and—so it would appear—of the literary culture in which she makes her home.

## Nazis, Poles, Jews

THE JEWS OF WARSAW 1939-1943: GHETTO, UNDERGROUND, REVOLT. By YISRAEL GUTMAN. Translated from the Hebrew by INA FRIEDMAN. *Indiana. 475 pp. $24.95.*
COURIER FROM WARSAW. By JAN NOWAK. Foreword by ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI. *Wayne. 479 pp. $24.95.*

*Reviewed by* MAURICE FRIEDBERG

JANUARY 1983 marked half-a-century since Hitler's advent to power. Forty years ago in April, Hitler's tanks and artillery were called out to level the remnants of what had only recently been Europe's largest Jewish community. Eventually, the ghetto of Warsaw was reduced to smoldering rubble, with all but a handful of its defenders killed.

The events themselves inevitably recede into the past and memories grow dimmer. And while oblivion may be understandably painful to those who still retain emotional ties to the events, the stakes are considerably higher for all of us. A concerted effort is under way not merely to efface the historical record of the Holocaust, but to turn its symbols and imagery against its victims and survivors. In the window of a picturesque little house in the medieval Flemish city of Ghent, I saw last fall a poster that looked deceptively familiar. It showed a mournful, emaciated child staring from behind barbed wire, with soldiers armed to the teeth in the background. The inscription appealed for help to Arab victims of Israeli "genocide."

The appearance of the English version of Yisrael Gutman's meticulously researched, detailed account of the fate of Warsaw's Jews under Nazi rule could thus hardly be more timely. Drawing on a vast array of archival materials and published sources in German, Polish, and Yiddish, Gutman, a professor at the Hebrew University and a director of the Yad Vashem memorial institute in Jerusalem, is also a survivor of the ghetto of which he is here a chronicler. That his account is restrained, dispassionate, and impartial almost to a fault attests to his scholarly integrity—and, one might add, to a rare ability to control his emotions.

The stage for the Warsaw ghetto's heroic and tragic end was set from the outset of the Nazi occupation. For months, the Jews endured seemingly spontaneous "attacks by individuals and gangs of Poles on Jewish passersby and apartment houses, which took on the proportions of a wave of pogroms." While there were indications that segments of the Polish intelligentsia condemned these outrages, it was also a fact that the Polish masses appeared to approve. It soon became apparent that the Jews could not count on assistance from any quarter, a premonition of sorts that they would stand alone in their final hour:

> The [Nazi-backed] Polish police ignored the rampages; the novice Polish underground did not respond at all; and the hoodlums learned that most of the Polish public, as well as the Germans, allowed them a free hand to attack Jews.

The otherwise hostile camps of defeated Poles and victorious Germans appeared united in their attitudes toward the country's Jews, in part because both profited economically from their plight. Hence, the establishment of the Warsaw ghetto, on November 16, 1940, may have been viewed by some as not an altogether sinister event. The walls of the ghetto would, after all, protect Jews from "spontaneous" mob violence, as such walls had done in the distant past. At the same time, the impression of a return to stability and order was fostered by the establishment of a *Judenrat*, a Nazi-appointed Jewish municipal administration over the almost 400,000 people (about a third of Warsaw's population)

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cramped into about 2 percent of the Polish capital's territory. (Since Nazi racial laws paid no attention to religious affiliation, the ghetto's inmates also happened to include nearly 2,000 converts to Christianity. These, however, were the chief beneficiaries of aid from Roman Catholic Poles.)

Hunger stalked the ghetto from the outset. According to a Polish source, the daily caloric content of Warsaw food rations in 1941 was 2,613 for Germans, 699 for Poles, 184 for Jews. Smuggling food into the ghetto was not, Gutman emphasizes, a form of aid. While most of the smugglers were, of course, Poles, "the smuggling enterprise operated on the basis of middlemen's profits and must be seen as one of the facets of black marketing that developed in wartime conditions." Starvation and disease plagued the ghetto, and corpses were picked up routinely from the sidewalks. (Incredibly, there was no serious crime. Not a single case of murder occurred during the ghetto's entire history.) There was also systematic plunder of the ghetto's inhabitants, with considerable interservice rivalry among the Wehrmacht, the SS, the SD, and the Gestapo.

A grotesquely analogous rivalry existed in the ghetto among the prewar Jewish political parties. These continued to function, oblivious to the seemingly self-evident fact that, in the words of Emmanuel Ringelblum, the ghetto's historian, "for Hitlerism, there was no difference between a Zionist and a Bundist; both were hated to the same degree. It wanted to destroy them both"—and ultimately did. Yet the Jewish socialists, for instance—both of the Zionist and of the anti-Zionist variety—could not shed their ideological blinders. Thus, on July 1, 1941, while Nazi tanks were already rolling through the USSR, the anti-Zionist Bund's paper, *Yunge Gvardye*, intoned:

> Every time the Jewish community falls upon hard times, whenever the reactionaries launch an attack on the freedom of the workers' movement accompanied by expressions of anti-Semitism, Jewish nationalism stirs beneath the surface. . . . All the peoples that Hitler has subjugated are in Hitler's exile. *The Austrians*[!], *Czechs, Poles, and Dutch are persecuted and oppressed. They have all been dealt a fate similar to that of the Jews, even though they have a country of their own.* [Emphasis added]

After the wave of deportations to death camps late in 1941, however, the political parties began to unite in a Jewish combat organization. And by the summer of 1942, after another series of mass deportations, it became clear that the Nazis' ultimate aim was the murder of all of the ghetto's inhabitants. The suicide of Adam Czerniakow, the head of the *Judenrat*, was tacit admission of this fact. (In retrospect Czerniakow, long viewed, understandably, as a traitor, emerges as a tragic figure who honestly thought that he could save at least some of Warsaw's Jews.) The rest of Yisrael Gutman's book is devoted to a detailed—occasionally too detailed—account of the uprising itself.

What of Poland's non-Jewish population? Toward the end of 1942 the Council for Aid to the Jews (*Zegota*) came into existence and its members helped thousands of Jews, often at a risk to their own lives. As for the bulk of the Polish population, "apathy and longstanding hostility [toward the Jews] intensified during the war." In Gutman's view, this was the result of two causes: the Poles' belief that the Jews had Communist leanings, and the fact that many Poles had inherited Jewish homes and businesses. Be that as it may, when the ghetto uprising flared up on April 19, 1943, "There was not so much as a single Pole inside the ghetto, either in the ranks or in the command of the fighting organizations." General Sikorski, the Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile, did broadcast an appeal for help to the ghetto on May 5, seventeen days after the uprising began, and three days before the fall of the Jewish headquarters. But in the London Polish government's official daily, *Dziennik Polski*, "the uprising in the ghetto was not mentioned at all for weeks pre-


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ceding and following Sikorski's address." The amount of weapons and ammunition offered to the Jews by the Polish underground, then reasonably well-supplied, was negligible.

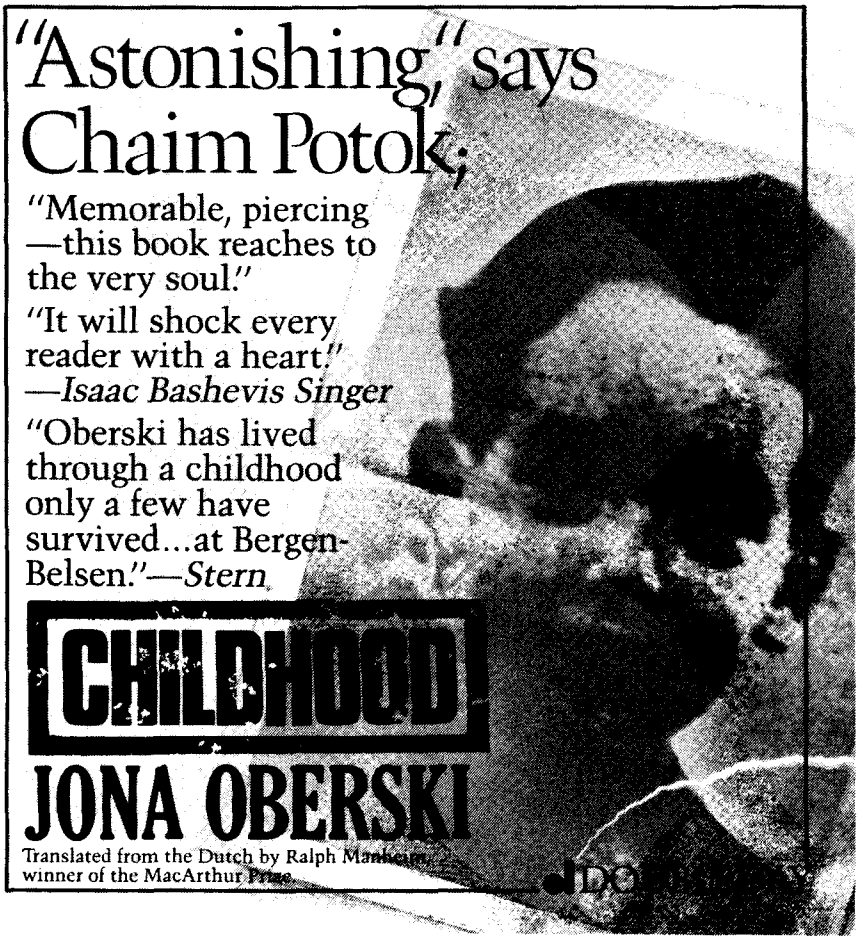
THAT the fate of Poland's Jews was not among the central concerns of Poland's government in London is also indirectly attested by *Courier from Warsaw*, a most interesting and informative book by Jan Nowak which, as Zbigniew Brzezinski rightly points out in his introduction, belongs among the very few war memoirs that are simultaneously fascinating, revealing, and historically important. Nowak is undoubtedly right in emphasizing that people in the West, including Jews, refused to believe that Poland's Jews were being systematically exterminated. The suicide in London of Shmuel Zygielbojm confirms that fact. (Zygielbojm, a Jewish socialist leader in prewar Poland, had hoped through his suicide to call attention to the tragedy of Polish Jewry; he failed.) This was not, however, the only or even the main reason for what was, above all, callous indifference.

But of this book's 477 pages, only about eight are devoted to the subject of Polish Jewry. The story Nowak is mainly concerned to relate is the story of how in the closing stages of World War II, the Western allies not only did nothing to avert the annexation by the USSR of roughly one-half of prewar Poland's territory and the imposition on Poland of a puppet Communist government, but actually helped Stalin in the execution of the plan. The ostensible reason for this duplicitous behavior with regard to a staunch, even if small, ally was a fear that unless appeased, the USSR might, in those closing months of the war, conclude a separate peace with Nazi Germany (a second stage, as it were, to the Nazi-Soviet honeymoon of 1939-41), thus making it more costly for the West to pursue the war until victory.

Needless to say, such rumors, if not actually concocted by Soviet propaganda, were strongly encouraged by the USSR. As a result, as Britain's official *History of the Second World War* conceded in 1971, the British failed to inform their Polish allies of the full story of the 1943 Teheran conference. In the wake of the conference, the Soviets "had left themselves free in Europe to enforce upon the Poles territorial and political conditions which would insure their subservience to the Soviet Union." In the view of Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Prime Minister of the Polish government in exile:

> Stalin was playing a crafty game, knowing very well that in the matter of the eastern frontier of Poland he had not only the support of Churchill but also of British and American public opinion, which was influenced by the knowledge that in our eastern territories Ukrainians and Byelorussians, not Poles, were a majority.

Mikolajczyk was no fanatic. "I am prepared to agree to any [territorial] compromise," he declared, "if somebody will convince me that territorial concessions will save our independence." Ultimately, of course, Mikolajczyk was prevailed upon to trade territory for peace—not that he had any choice in the matter. The rest is history, and a decade later Mikolajczyk was once again an émigré.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## Science and Values

PLUTO'S REPUBLIC. By PETER MEDAWAR. *Oxford University Press. 351 pp. $25.00.*

*Reviewed by* JEFFREY MARSH

SIR PETER MEDAWAR is an ornament of British science. A zoologist who shared the 1960 Nobel Prize in medicine for his work in tissue transplantation, Medawar has made a distinctive imprint on intellectual life in general by his

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JEFFREY MARSH, *who contributed "Evolution and Its Discontents" to our November 1982 issue, writes frequently on science for* COMMENTARY *and other publications.*

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urbane and witty reflections on the place of science in culture. His latest book, *Pluto's Republic,* a collection of about twenty-five essays, lectures, reviews, and reflections, represents the distillation of Medawar's thoughts over almost a quarter of a century. It is especially valuable for its presentation of the way a foremost leader of the scientific establishment views the relationship between his domain and the rest of society. It also reveals a surprising number of contradictions and prejudices.

The title of his book, Medawar explains in a lengthy introduction, began life as a malapropism coined by a neighbor in a discussion of philosophy, and he appropriated it as an apt appellation for the intellectual underworld of pseudo-science and fuzzy thinking which he explores in a number of the book's chapters. The exposure and demolition of several such ideas is one of the main themes of the book; another has to do with the essential nature of the scientific process.

In sketching the way in which science progresses, Medawar repeatedly turns to the interplay between imagination and criticism. While the source of the scientist's ideas lies in his imagination, and the creative process by which they originate deep in the mind is just as mysterious as is the poetic impulse, the theories themselves are quite worthless as science until they are tested against reality by observation and experiment. Explaining the difference between science and literature, Medawar points out that whereas criticism is a separate branch of literary activity, in science, imagination and criticism are indissolubly linked. The false dichotomy between scientific thought and poetic imagination, he argues, is a regrettable misunderstanding dating back to the Romantic era.

It is not only poets, however, who have misunderstood the way in which scientists view the world. Medawar examines the errors that philosophers have made in trying to describe the scientific method without having any real familiarity with it. He explodes the myth, most commonly associated with the name of John Stuart Mill, that there exists a logical process of induction which enables the derivation of general laws from a sufficient number of specific observations. Medawar suggests that one source of Mill's error may be a mistaken notion of the role of experiment in science. In fact, experiments can perform a variety of functions, from the primitive Baconian conception of setting up an artificial situation just to see what will happen to the more systematic use of experimentation to test hypotheses logically. While the Baconian spirit of free inquiry is necessary initially, it is only when a logically coherent structure of hypotheses and deductions is compared with the real world that meaningful science is produced. As a devotee of Karl Popper's account of the scientific process, Medawar stresses the importance of hypotheses, even when they are not fully articulated, in preparing the mind to interpret the significance of observation and experiment.

In this connection Medawar discusses sympathetically the ideas of a number of 18th- and 19th-century British philosophers, notably Stanley Jevons and William Whewell, who can be regarded as precursors of Popper, as was the French physiologist Claude Bernard. He finds little merit, however, in the theory of scientific discovery advanced by Arthur Koestler in a number of his books, notably *The Act of Creation.* Koestler, stressing the formal resemblance between humor and all sorts of creative thought, argued that just as a joke arises from the juxtaposition of two formerly unconnected ideas, so too does a new scientific theory. Medawar judges Koestler's analogy to be an inadequate substitute for the empirical detail and testable predictions that a truly scientific theory must have.

Medawar's dismissal of any nonfalsifiable theory as patently unscientific applies in full force to psychoanalysis, which he regards as a structure of mythological beliefs whose adherents have armored themselves against possible dis-


# The Soviet Union and the Arms Race

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proof by making these beliefs capable of explaining any behavior whatsoever. His ire is particularly aroused when practitioners of psychoanalysis assert its value in the treatment of conditions for which physical causes are determinable and which can be successfully treated by conventional medical techniques.

If Medawar does not like psychoanalysis because of its all-encompassing vagueness, he objects to psychometrics—and particularly to IQ testing—on the opposite ground: in seeking to assign a numerical value to the subtle quality of human intelligence, psychometrics attempts to quantify the unquantifiable. As against the notion that it is possible to assign a fixed fraction of intelligence to heredity and the remainder to environmental influences, Medawar argues that there are so many possible environmental influences, ranging from home background to micro-elements in the diet, all of which can have significant effects on brain development, that any attempt to tie IQ to racial background is futile.

MEDAWAR's explorations in the evolution of scientific thought touch on a number of biological thinkers of the past century. He is awed by Herbert Spencer's ambition and energy in attempting to construct a philosophic system embracing biology, sociology, psychology, and ethics, all tied together by belief in a general principle of evolution, although he concludes that Spencer used so many different meanings for evolution that little insight was ultimately gained. Moving closer to today, Medawar is unsparing in his treatment of Teilhard de Chardin's best-selling attempt to fuse evolutionary thought and religion, *The Phenomenon of Man*, which he describes as "a feeble argument, abominably expressed."

By contrast, a major figure in 20th-century biology for whom Medawar evinces great sympathy is J.B.S. Haldane. Medawar says that Haldane was "the cleverest man I ever knew" when it came to an intuitive grasp of scientific concepts. He also points out Haldane's physical bravery, as displayed in his service in World War I and his self-experimentation with poison gases. To be sure, these traits were shared with a variety of failings—including total administrative incompetence, a violent temper which terrified both clerical staff and technicians, pathological dishonesty in personal relationships, and a level of cognitive dissonance which enabled this brilliant biologist to endorse Stalinism wholeheartedly, including the show trials and Lysenko's heretical biological theories.

Medawar concludes the book with a presidential address he delivered to the British Association for the Advancement of Science which epitomizes his belief in the role of science in society. The scientific method, by its carefully balanced blending of imaginative speculation and rigorous self-criticism, has given mankind an unparalleled way of describing and working with nature. The material accomplishments in the few centuries since this happy synthesis was achieved have enabled humans largely to shift from eschatological hopes to worldly endeavors, and a continuation of this progress remains man's best hope for improving his lot upon earth.

THIS closing message reflects the single idea which dominates this collection most strongly: the objectivity of the scientific method gives us our best chance of understanding reality. It is all the more disappointing, then, that Medawar is himself sometimes guilty of a double standard of judgment.

One striking example is in Medawar's attitude toward statistical analysis, an invaluable tool of scientific research but only when used appropriately. Curiously enough, Medawar holds up as a model the statistical inquiry made by the 19th-century polymath, Francis Galton, into the efficacy of prayer, while ridiculing the use of statistics by a certain rather ponderous school of literary criticism which has applied it to a content analysis of Restoration comedy. More seriously, after pointing out

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why it is impossible in principle to separate genetic and environmental influence on human intelligence, he simply dismisses out of hand the highly sophisticated statistical analyses performed by psychometricians. He makes no attempt to explain either why the use of statistical methods is invalid here, or, alternatively, what is wrong in the way they have been applied. And he has nothing to say about what their results would mean for his own ideas on the subject, or what alternative hypotheses might be advanced to explain the results of psychometric analysis.

Another example of intellectual inconsistency is Medawar's simultaneous admiration for Herbert Spencer's breadth of ambition and his unsparing demolition of Teilhard de Chardin's effusiveness in a similar intellectual direction. He indulges calmly J.B.S. Haldane's peculiar combination of scientific insight, political myopia, and ethically monstrous behavior, going so far as to describe it as Johnsonian, surely a disservice to the memory of a profoundly moral figure. By contrast, he is unable to forgive Norman St. John Stevas for simply expressing his disagreement with Medawar's position on abortion by means of an anecdote. Stevas quoted a hypothetical conversation between two doctors: "About the terminating of pregnancy, I want your opinion. The father was syphilitic. The mother tuberculous. Of the four children born, the first was blind, the second died, the third deaf and dumb, the fourth was also tuberculous. What would you have done?" "I would have ended the pregnancy." "Then you would have murdered Beethoven." In his anger at Stevas for what he calls "this rabble-rousing utterance," Medawar completely misses the obvious point of the story, which is the human inability to foretell the future—a point which Medawar himself stresses at length in a number of places.

These inconsistencies, blind spots, and prejudices serve to remind the reader, otherwise perhaps awed by the subtlety and breadth of Medawar's mind, that when it comes to questions of basically held values, this aristocrat of the kingdom of science is himself not immune from the ills he diagnoses in Pluto's Republic.

## Anti-Modernists

THE WORLD OF THE YESHIVA: AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF ORTHODOX JEWRY. By WILLIAM B. HELMREICH. *Macmillan / The Free Press. 412 pp. $19.95.*

*Reviewed by* JULIUS WEINBERG

UNTIL recent years, Orthodox Judaism has been considered a negligible factor in the American Jewish experience—and for good reason. In the 19th century, the trend toward Reform dominated the religious beliefs and practices of the Central European Jews who settled here in the decades before and after the Civil War, and in the 20th century, particularly in the decades shortly after World War II, Conservative Judaism tended to become the preponderant religious mode of Eastern European immigrants and their children. Within the last quarter of a century, however, both these trends—essentially efforts to modernize an ancient faith—appear to have been weakened. While Orthodoxy is still in the minority position in terms of numbers, it has made striking gains on the American Jewish scene. What is more, the sector of Orthodoxy that has advanced the farthest is its "right wing," sometimes known as the ultra-Orthodox.

Central to this revitalization has been the yeshiva, an institution commonly, albeit mistakenly, regarded as an instrument for the training of rabbis; it is in reality a schooling process for Orthodox males who aspire to live a life bounded by the Torah and Halakhah, Jewish religious law. In *The World of the Yeshiva,* the sociologist William B. Helmreich provides a history of the yeshiva movement in the United States and an analy-

JULIUS WEINBERG *teaches at Cleveland State University and writes on American and Jewish history. Little, Brown will be bringing out the fourth edition of* The Social Fabric, *of which he is co-editor, in the near future.*

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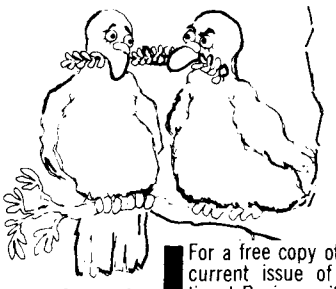

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sis of the relationship between this institution and the resurgence of Orthodoxy.

Although of ancient origins, the yeshiva, as we know it, is directly the product of Lithuanian Jewry. A century and a half ago, numerous such institutions existed to train young men for a life of study and observance. The central feature of their educational philosophy, as Helmreich notes, was "the idea of *Torah lishmo*—study for its own sake or, more precisely, for a higher spiritual purpose. . . . The guiding motive was to attain knowledge as an end in itself, not spiritual ecstasy or the acquisition of practical skills." This model of learning is still alive in the yeshiva functioning in the United States today.

Prior to the 1940's, only a few yeshivas existed in the United States, most of them with small enrollments and almost all in financial straits. Two of them fostered a "modern" interpretation of Orthodoxy, permitting and even encouraging the study of secular subjects on the college level. The first of these was the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York, which came to maturity under the leadership of Bernard Revel. The second, less influential, was the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago. Then there were the handful of small, anti-modernist yeshivas, which in time were to be of greater influence on the "rightist" course taken by American Orthodoxy. One, under the leadership of the charismatic Rabbi Yehudah Levenberg, was located in New Haven and later in Cleveland; another, Ner Israel, in Baltimore, an offshoot of the Cleveland yeshiva, was under the guidance of the erudite Rabbi Yaakov Ruderman; and there were several in New York City, most importantly the Mesivta Torah Vodaath in Williamsburg under the leadership of Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, who, while disdaining a rabbinical title, did more than any single individual to establish the institutional and ideological foundations for the Orthodox revival of the postwar era.

The proliferation of yeshivas in the United States and their increasingly "right-wing" coloration came about partly as a result of the arrival here of several major rabbinic figures of Lithuanian Jewry in the years just prior to World War II. These émigrés shunned what they considered the intellectual liberalism and social permissiveness of the Orthodox "modernists." They inculcated in their disciples a level of talmudic learning, a style of life, and an ideology that had more in common with 19th-century Volozhin than with 20th-century New York. In the first two decades after World War II, hundreds of day schools and dozens of yeshivas of higher learning were established by these émigrés and their students, attracting, for periods of prolonged and intense study, thousands of young men seeking to identify themselves with the new Orthodoxy. By the 70's, the Lithuanian yeshivas had assumed a central role within the Orthodox community, fostering patterns of behavior and thought that affected Orthodoxy as a whole.

CENTRAL to the yeshiva curriculum is the study of the Talmud; crucial to its distinctiveness as an institution is the personality and world view of its head, the *rosh yeshiva*.

The Talmud is studied according to canons of logic developed over the centuries. In *chavrusas* or partnerships in which pairs of students come together for an initial preparation of assignments, in classes, and in weekly lectures given by the *rosh yeshiva*, the text is explored, explained, and analyzed within a context, as Helmreich states, of "verbal jousting that seeks to introduce hidden meanings and to provide interpretations, often of a novel nature, to an often complex and intricate text." As Helmreich notes, albeit insufficiently, there are also implicit limitations to this method of study, bounds beyond which the dialogue cannot be taken and which are firmly and quickly communicated to the student by the magisterial authority of the *rosh yeshiva*.

Qualifications for this post are several: talmudic erudition of the highest order, piety, a suitable degree of charisma, fund-raising skill, and, if possible, administrative competence. Quite clearly, a particular *rosh yeshiva* will be stronger in one area than in others. Yeshiva heads

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will differ, too, in the impact of their personality and ideology on a yeshiva program. The late Rabbi Aharon Kotler, head of the Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey (the "Harvard" of the American yeshivas), exacted obedience through the awesome incisiveness he brought to bear upon any subject under discussion, textual or ideological. Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz made his mark through his ability to combine the visionary and the practicable. Rabbi E.M. Bloch and Rabbi Mordecai Katz of the Telshe Yeshiva won their authority by successfully replicating a Lithuanian regimen in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, now in his eighties, reigns supreme by virtue of a sagacity that borders on saintliness.

HELMREICH's volume is an informative, comprehensive treatment of a singular and relatively obscure institution in American Jewish life. Many aspects of yeshiva life are dealt with here: history and structure; ideological and programmatic currents; the socioeconomic and subethnic makeup of student bodies; the path to success in a yeshiva; deviance; and the impact of the yeshiva on subsequent occupations and careers. Although the topics are dealt with judiciously, Helmreich's approach is, at times, more comprehensive than incisive. A model of academic sociology—replete with statistical data, interviews, and participant-observation—*The World of the Yeshiva* is analytically a bit thin.

One problem is Helmreich's otherwise laudable reverence for his subject, an attitude which leads him to take words and actions at face value. Another is his reluctance to explore fully the latent meanings of yeshiva rituals and practices—the way the daily and yearly schedule is formed, the "pairing" of students, the discourses on morals and ethics provided on a weekly basis by the spiritual supervisor of the yeshiva. On the other hand, he does grapple with some success with the main paradox raised by the proliferation of yeshivas and their students in today's highly secular and permissive society, and, indeed, by the growing influence and strength of Orthodoxy's radical right wing.

One major element behind this phenomenon has already been noted: the arrival of men with established skills and reputations and possessing a firm notion, based on their experience in Europe, of how to deal with the challenges of secularism. In contrast to earlier Orthodox leaders in this country, who tended to be defensive about their ability to maintain the levels of Jewish literacy and observance they had left behind in Europe, the Lithuanian yeshiva heads came with a sense of cultural superiority to modernism in both its Jewish and non-Jewish guises, and with a vision of Orthodoxy as a force independent of either.

In time, this right-wing elite drew into its ranks other segments of the

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Jewish community: those among the earlier immigrants who had never abandoned the values and traditions of piety and learning that flourished in Eastern Europe; some of their more Americanized counterparts, largely in the Young Israel movement; refugees from the Holocaust and their children; the offspring of Hasidic families; and, finally, children of committed "modernists" who, in a strange amalgam of rebellion and conformity, have found prolonged study in a right-wing yeshiva to be an instrument through which they can at once chastise their parents for "laxity" and, at the same time, fulfill their parents' religious commitments.

All of this, moreover, has come about in an era of unparalleled prosperity and opportunity, enabling young men to study for extended periods of time before establishing themselves professionally or entering the business world. This, one might say, has been the "American" contribution to the success of Orthodoxy. Also helpful in the advance of right-wing Orthodoxy has been the new pluralism of American life generally and the increased appreciation for ethnic distinctiveness in particular.

ONE might think, then, that ultra-Orthodoxy has a rosy future ahead of it. It is certainly true that Orthodox "modernists" are currently on the defensive, while the movement's right wing displays striking élan. The strength of the Orthodox educational system, the rise in individual affluence, the palpable growth of community pride—all seem to point upward.

This portrait, however, may be a deceptive one. While the "modernists" may be on the defensive, it is equally true that the authoritarian temper which the yeshiva both needs and tends to foster in its disciples is under an ongoing challenge from contemporary trends in American life—its permissiveness, the wide field of professional and economic opportunity it offers, its spirit of secularism, and its cultural and social egalitarianism. Furthermore, the archaism and the insularity of right-wing Orthodoxy, preoccupied as it is with ritual, intolerant of outsiders, subject to bouts of internecine warfare within, and unresolved in its attitude toward the "secular" state of Israel, may turn out to be as costly for the right wing as the struggle with modernity has been for those in Orthodoxy's liberal camp.

The yeshiva in the last century has come to serve, along with the family, as the last refuge of Orthodox Jews. As the authority of Halakhah in Jewish life has declined, the yeshiva has become an instrument for fighting off the threats of modernity. Whether so fragile an institution can serve so large a purpose, or whether the yeshiva will in the end have done little more than create the illusion of renaissance, is a question time alone will answer.

## What Children Need

IN DEFENSE OF THE FAMILY. By RITA KRAMER. *Basic Books. 263 pp. $15.50.*

*Reviewed by* CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

ANYONE who remembers the White House Conference on Families that took place during the Carter era, or the publication in 1977 of *All Our Children* by Kenneth Keniston and the Carnegie Council, will recall them as major events in the evolution of a pair of peculiarly contemporary doctrines. According to the first of these doctrines, the term "family" may be properly affixed to practically any aggregation of more than one person gathered, at least for the nonce, under a single roof. It matters not, in this understanding, whether a couple are, were, or perhaps one day will be married to each other, whether they are of the same or different gender (or "sexual orientation"), whether their association is fleeting or durable, affectionate or vengeful. So long as there are two or more persons domiciled together, they are legitimately regarded as a family and entitled to all rights and privileges pertaining thereto.

These rights and privileges are not insignificant, for they include —this is the second doctrine—the right of any children who may be part of any family to be looked after by the society as a whole. The rearing of one's biological offspring, according to this view, is not exclusively or even primarily the responsibility of oneself, one's spouse, or the adults resident in one's "household." Rather, "all our children" are everyone's responsibility, to be fed, clothed, taught, loved, disciplined, and given character through the magic of public policy.

I exaggerate, but not very much. Certainly one major drift of "progressive" opinion in recent years has been toward a loose and accepting definition of the family, combined with firm and insistent demands on the larger society to assume responsibility for the well-being of children. This has had a number of damaging consequences, of which much the worst is the increase in social dependency, especially within what sociologists term the "underclass," where today one commonly finds a majority of youngsters born out of wedlock and raised by a single parent—or in an "extended family"—with the assistance of diverse public-welfare programs. Though this tangle of social pathology has many strands, one cannot reasonably doubt that there would be less aggregate dependency if the society were less tolerant of illegitimacy and less willing to underwrite the associated costs.

In the middle classes, too, we find unfortunate correlates of the slackening of social pressure on adults to marry (and stay married to) other adults of the opposite sex and to shoulder primary responsibility as parents for the nurturing and training of their progeny. We find anxiety bordering on guilt among a number of women who in fact stay home to look after their children rather than "going back to work" at occupations with higher cultural approval ratings. We find a growing child-care industry, ever more professionalized, ever more heavily regulated by the state, running programs and institutions that are ever less like "home." We find a swelling demand for the schools to assume such responsibilities as the transmission to children of values, morals, and correct behavior.

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CHESTER E. FINN, JR. *is professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University.*

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and affectionate, she harbors what many will deem old-fashioned views, namely, that an authentic family consists of husband, wife, and children, and that raising the children is the foremost responsibility of the parents, not something to be done for them by public or private agencies while the adults engage in other pursuits. Her book, however, is not an exercise in finger-wagging or tradition-mongering. Rather, Mrs. Kramer's image of the proper ordering of family and society is grounded in her understanding of child development, of human psychology, and of the requisites for the emergence of an autonomous young adult as a responsible and productive member of democratic society who will in time become a competent parent of the next generation.

To STATE her thesis simply, the successful development of the child requires the sustained and active involvement of both parents. This does not mean entrusting the child to the care of well-chosen professionals; it means looking after the child oneself. And those doing the looking-after must act like his parents, not his buddies. "Only in a stable family with strong and affectionate parents," Mrs. Kramer writes,

> does a child grow up with the sense of being protected in a world that makes sense. Such a beginning provides the basis for the flexibility of response that will help him learn and overcome difficulties in later life. Such parents are able to let the child go little by little as he indicates a need and an ability to move out on his own. They instill conscience rather than dependency. The paradox is that only by remaining strong authority figures can they help their child become independent. He learns from what they are, what they do, what it is to be an adult.

The centrality of the parents and the stability of the family have several corollaries. Formal institutions, notably the schools, are to play supporting rather than leading roles in the drama of child-rearing. If parents attend to their child's values and character, if they assume responsibility for sex education and moral development, the schools can concentrate on cognitive skills and subject matter. This is desirable, both because intellectual development is something that schools can do well (and that parents seldom can) and because the controversies surrounding such curricular and pedagogical matters are far less fractious than those involving issues of faith and morals.

Mrs. Kramer is firmly of the view that parents cannot successfully carry out their responsibilities, particularly toward very young children, unless one of them stays home with the youngsters, and she does not hesitate to assert that this should ordinarily be the mother (she stops short of making it a universal rule). Mrs. Kramer seeks to assuage whatever feelings of guilt or incompleteness beset the woman who elects to stay home and be a mother rather than to pop her toddler into a day-care center and go off (or back) to paid employment—and there can be no doubt that this book will have such an assuaging effect on a woman who takes it seriously (perhaps even on her husband as well), just as it will infuriate those who for whatever reasons turn over their youngsters to the care of others and salve their consciences with the notion that they are being modern.

Speaking of Mrs. Kramer's enemies, they will also include the professional child-care industry, most of the education establishment, radical feminist and homosexual activists, and all those individuals in our society who have organized their private and work lives around values that presuppose the governmentalization of child-rearing and the steady growth of "family policy." Yet the objective reader will see that Mrs. Kramer has worked her way through these issues and is confident—I think justly so—of her conclusions.

More troublesome is the problem posed by the growing number of families and quasi-families found in the underclass, households so severely disrupted and parents so manifestly incompetent as essentially to rule out the possibility of successful child-rearing along the lines Mrs. Kramer envisions. She acknowledges this problem, and does not pretend to solve it. Indeed, the very image she creates of proper child-rearing accentuates the gravity of the situation of those who cannot realistically attain it. Nor can public policy successfully step into the breach. Government can transfer resources, thereby easing some of the direct economic hardship of the underclass family, and it can supply certain social services—all the while risking increased dependency—but it cannot substitute for parents.

APART from its limited applicability to such families, Mrs. Kramer's splendid volume has (to my mind) only relatively minor shortcomings. First, she barely touches on the subject of birth control and never mentions abortion. Second, a number of couples do appear successful in splitting the duties of parenthood along lines somewhat more varied than the traditional model—mother as omnipresent comforter, father as breadwinner and authority figure—that Rita Kramer sketches. Finally, Mrs. Kramer scants the single-parent, middle-class family in which an increasing number of youngsters live, as well as the more complicated arrangements of step-parents and adoptive parents that envelop the child whose biological parents were once married to each other but are now married to (or cohabiting with) others.

Yet while *In Defense of the Family* addresses these latter situations only indirectly, its message is clear and fully applicable to them: a child needs two resident parents, a stable home environment, and a great deal of attention. Being parents is a serious responsibility, and it is not one that can be transferred to others, least of all to government. Raising children is the proper business of the family; indeed, it is the defining characteristic of the family. What is remarkable is that we should live in a time when it is necessary for someone to come to the defense of such a family.

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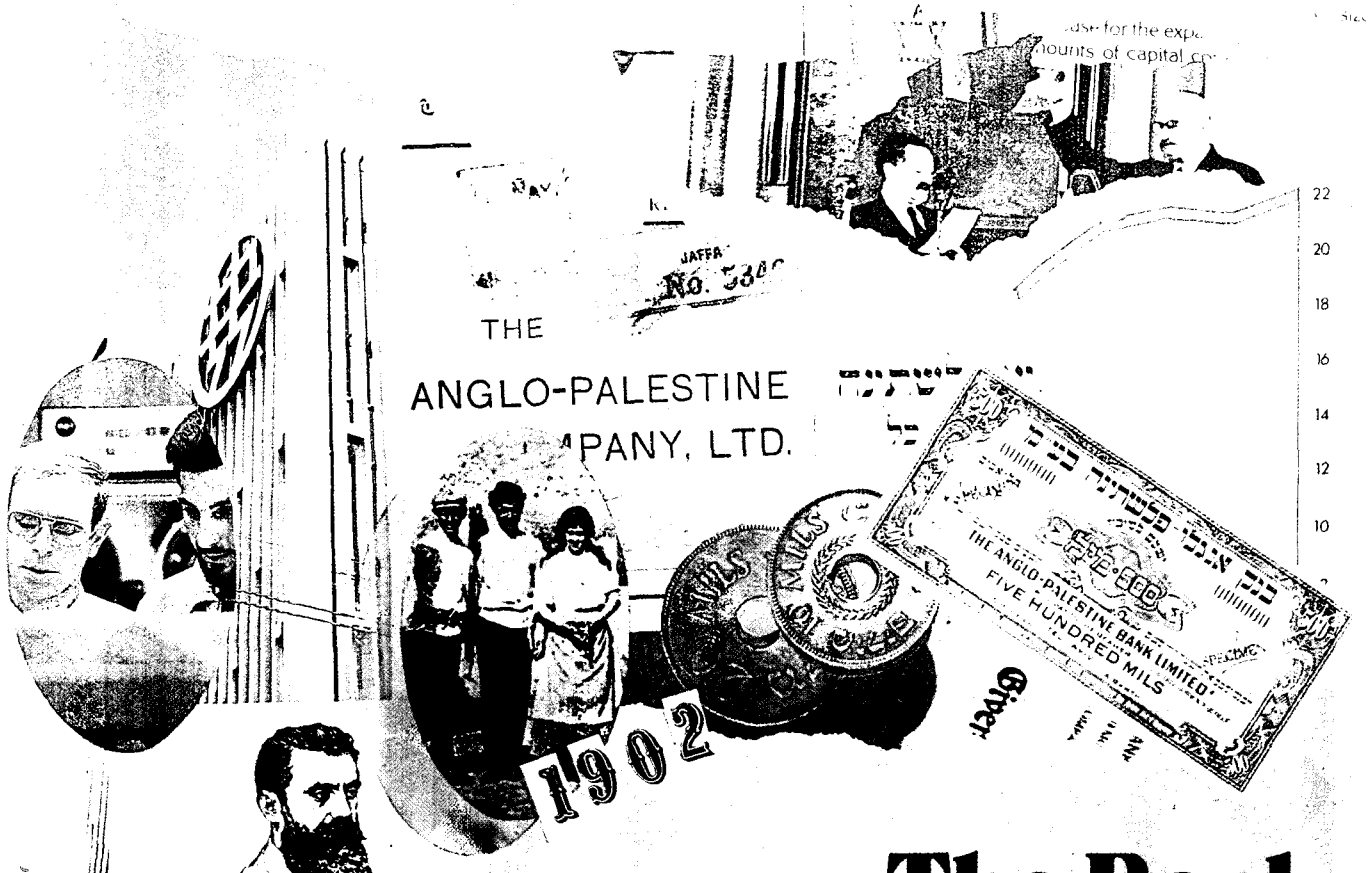


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**Consumer Orientation**
No. 22 in a Series
**Subject:** Luftwiderstand.
The Porsche Concept of
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# 22 Porsche 944

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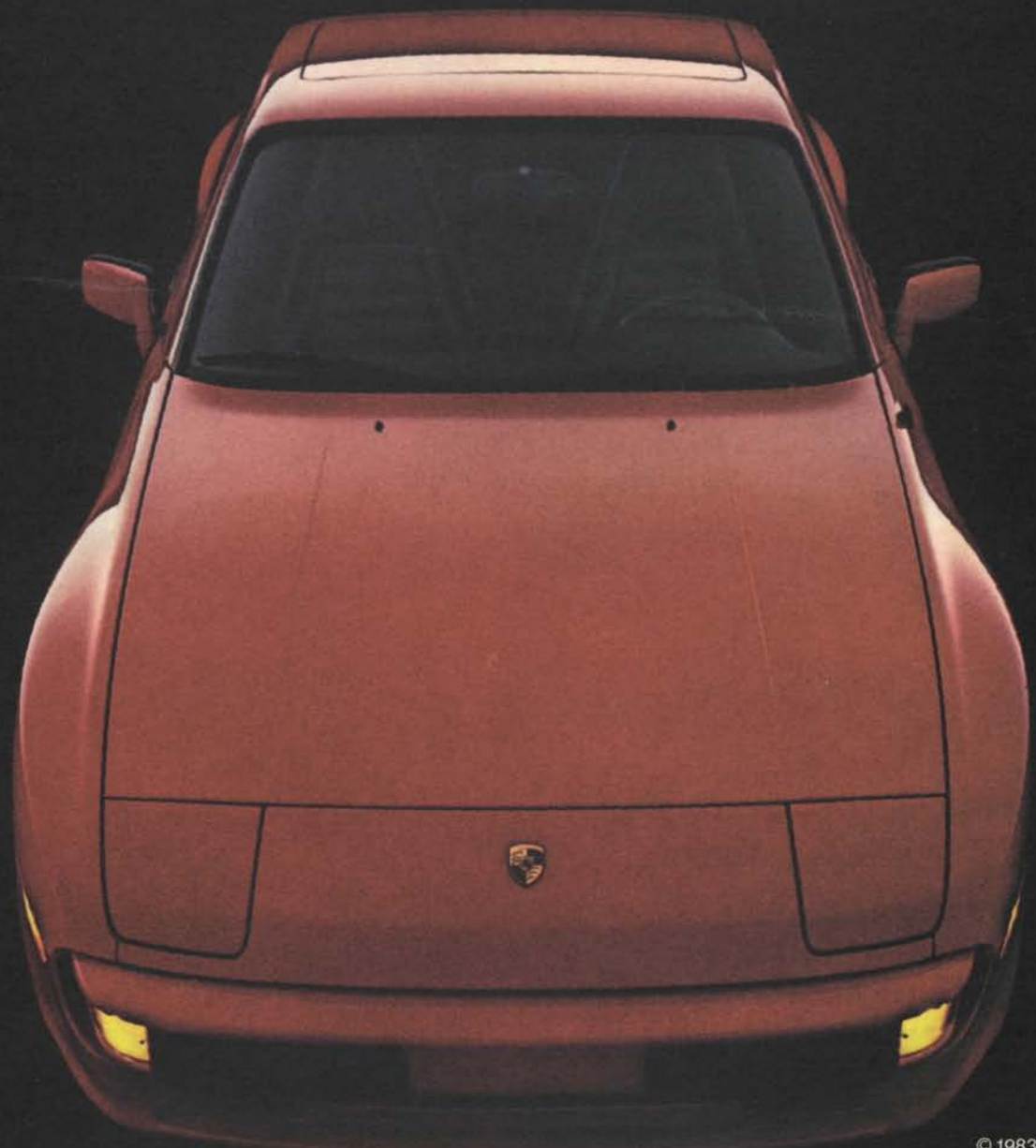

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